

Russia Rebounds / The Last Nazi Trials

Newsweek

04.24.2015

THE KILLER

PHARMACY

INSIDE
A MEDICAL
MASS
MURDER
CASE



Newsweek

FEATURES

KILLER PHARMACY: INSIDE A MEDICAL MASS MURDER CASE

How a seemingly innocuous pharmacy was making millions of dollars by cutting corners, fabricating records and ignoring laws designed to keep contaminated drugs off the market.



*NEW YORK CITY
WOULD REALLY
RATHER NOT TALK
ABOUT ITS
SLAVERY-LOVING PAST*

DOWNLOADS



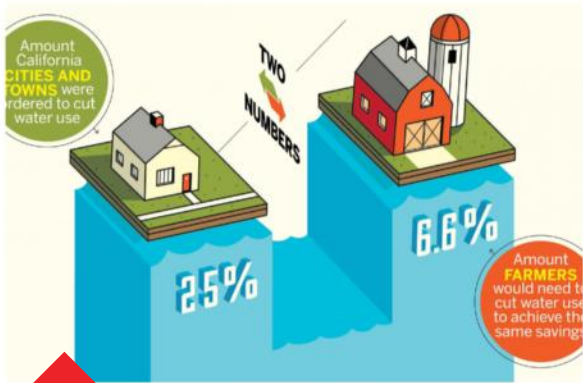
01

*WHAT SANCTIONS?
THE RUSSIAN
ECONOMY IS
GROWING AGAIN*



02

*THE COMPLEX
POLITICS BEHIND
THE CHAOS IN
YEMEN*



03

*CALIFORNIA'S
FARMS WOULD
ONLY NEED TO
CUT WATER BY
6.6 PERCENT TO
MATCH URBAN
RESTRICTIONS*



04

*THE RACE AGAINST
TIME TO CONVICT
SURVIVING NAZIS*



05

*THE HIDDEN COSTS
OF THE WORLD'S
GHOST APARTMENTS*

NEW WORLD



*A ROBOT THAT
CAN INSERT
CATHETERS,
COMING SOON
TO A HOSPITAL
NEAR YOU*

DOWNTIME



*ELI KLEIN ON
RIDING THE WAVE
OF CHINA'S
CONTEMPORARY
ART SCENE*



*HOW ALBERT
MAYSLES
TAUGHT
AMERICA TO
FEEL*



*THE LAST
(OR AT LEAST
LOONIEST)
NEWSPAPER IN
AMERICA*



*RENTING A
GOAT FROM
AMAZON*

BIG SHOTS

WELCOME TO THE RACE



HOUTHIS AND BLOWBACK

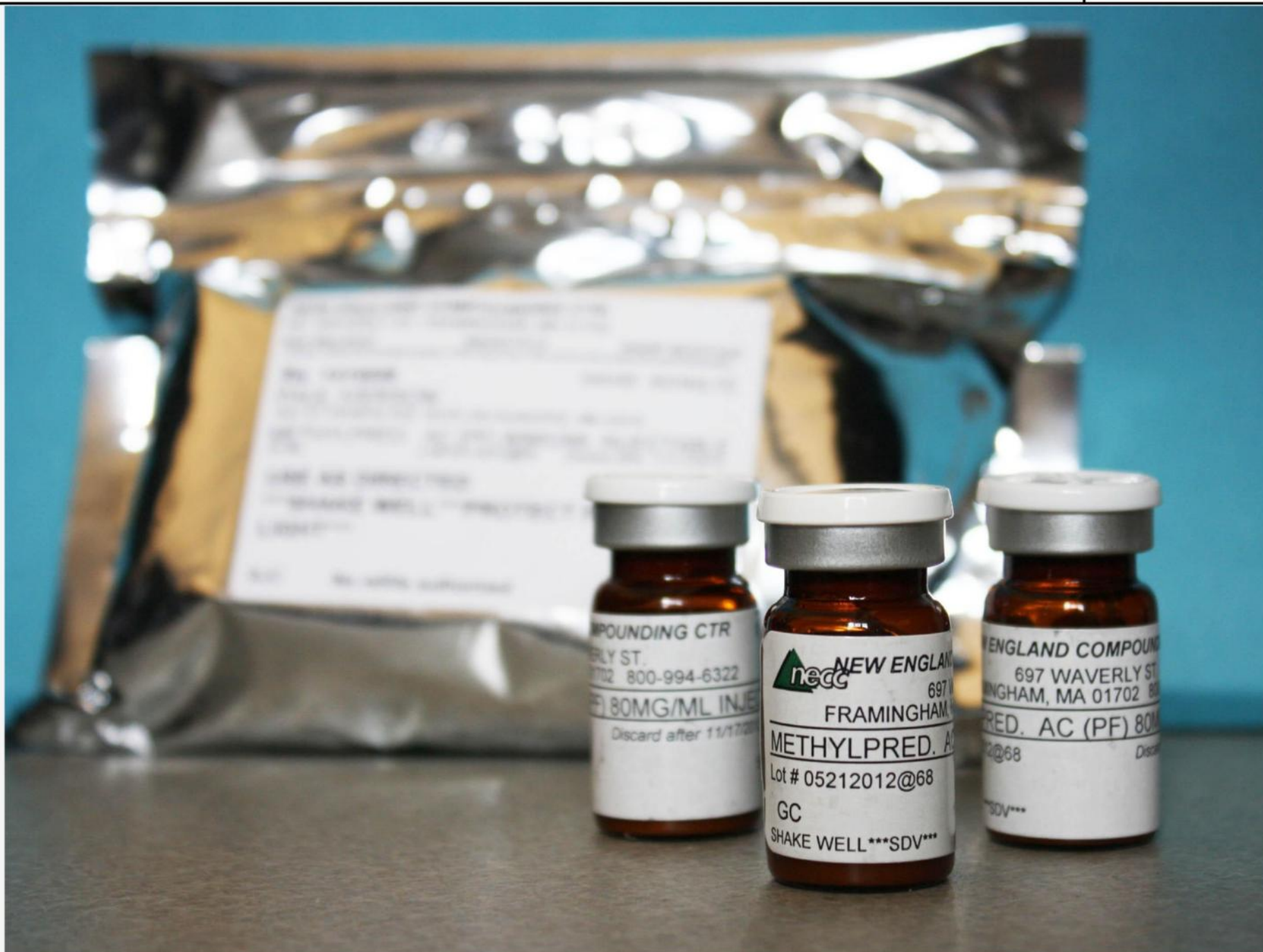


HOLA, NEIGHBOR!



FROM WEDDING TO FUNERAL





Minnesota Department of Health/AP

KILLER PHARMACY: INSIDE A MEDICAL MASS MURDER CASE

**HOW A SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS PHARMACY WAS
MAKING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS BY CUTTING CORNERS,
FABRICATING RECORDS AND IGNORING LAWS
DESIGNED TO KEEP CONTAMINATED DRUGS OFF THE
MARKET.**

It was just another colorless trade show, one of thousands held each year in hotels across the United States. But it was there, at an Embassy Suites in Franklin, Tennessee, that

the simple handoff of a business card proved to be the first link in a two-year chain of events that led to the horrific, tortuous deaths of the first victims in a mass killing that trailed from New England to Tennessee, from Michigan to North Carolina.

Health workers packed the hotel for the annual meeting of the Freestanding Ambulatory Surgery Center Association, hoping to network, listen to medical presentations and meet industry salespeople plying their wares. Among the hundreds wandering about on the second day of the conference—September 24, 2010—was John Notarianni, regional sales manager for the New England Compounding Center (NECC), a Massachusetts pharmacy. Like any good salesman, Notarianni was glad-handing prospects while passing out business cards and advertising material. At some point, he crossed paths with Debra Schamberg, a nurse and facility director with the St. Thomas Outpatient Neurosurgery Center in nearby Nashville.

For a few minutes, Notarianni pitched his company, telling Schamberg about the pharmaceuticals NECC had available, including injectable methylprednisolone acetate, a steroid commonly used for pain management. Since her outpatient center spent much of the workday injecting steroids into hips, joints and backs, Schamberg was intrigued. She took Notarianni's business card and pamphlets and then went on her way, thinking she may have found a great alternative to the usual pharmacies the outpatient center used.

But NECC wasn't a promising drug supplier—it was a lethal, venomous scourge. This seemingly innocuous pharmacy in a Framingham strip mall was making millions of dollars by cutting corners, fabricating records and ignoring laws designed to keep contaminated drugs off the market. NECC perpetrated what may be one of the most murderous corporate crimes in U.S. history by pumping out

deadly medicines that infected more than 800 people with fungal meningitis in 2012, 64 of whom died.



Vials of the injectable steroid product made by New England Compounding Center implicated in a fungal meningitis outbreak that were being shipped to the CDC from Minneapolis are seen on Oct. 9, 2012 Credit:

Minnesota Department of Health/AP

The outbreak traced to this one pharmacy set off investigations by federal and state health officials, the Justice Department and Congress. Three months ago, a federal grand jury indicted 14 people who worked for or were connected to NECC on 131 charges, which included assorted counts of murder, racketeering, fraud, conspiracy and other alleged crimes.

Despite the scale of the killings and the scope of the investigations, the inside story of the events that led to the lethal outbreak and its discovery is being told for the first time here. Newsweek's examination of the NECC deaths was pieced together from emails, order forms, investigators' notes, drug company and court records, and

sworn statements of participants, as well as interviews with people connected to the case.

No More Mickey Mouse!

The murderous tale begins with that innocuous meeting between Notarianni and Schamberg, neither of whom was ever charged with wrongdoing and may well have been no more than unsuspecting pawns in a cruel and deadly multimillion-dollar scam.

Like any good salesman, Notarianni called Schamberg every few months after their encounter at the trade show, urging her to purchase the steroids and other drugs sold by his company. “I went back to my manager, and he said he really would like to offer you better to earn your business,” Notarianni wrote in an email on May 17, 2011. “What price would we need to give you to gain your business on the [injectable steroids]?”

Notarianni’s timing could scarcely have been better. Within a few weeks, Clint Pharmaceuticals, the outpatient center’s usual supplier of injectable steroids, boosted its price by \$2.46 per 1-milliliter vial of the drug, to \$8.95; the cost of sterile manufacturing was climbing and supply was shrinking. Schamberg pushed Clint for a better deal, but no go. So she typed an email to Notarianni on June 11, 2011: “If pricing is still \$6.50 [per vial], I am willing to do business with you.”

Over the next few months, officials with St. Thomas Outpatient Neurosurgery Center sent orders to NECC. Mario G. Giamei Jr., Notarianni’s successor as regional sales manager, took over the account, court records show. Things between NECC and the outpatient center continued to go well until around early 2012, when Giamei, who has not been charged with wrongdoing, dropped by the clinic and told Schamberg a problem had emerged—NECC needed a lot of patient names, and fast.



The waste management operation owned by Conigliaro Industries behind the New England Compounding Center (NECC), which is connected to an outbreak of meningitis, October 16, 2012. Credit: John Tlumacki/The Boston Globe/Getty

Unlike a drug manufacturer or wholesaler, NECC was a compounding pharmacy, licensed only to sell medications to fill individual prescriptions. In other words, it wasn't allowed to market drugs in batches to clinics and doctors—even though that was exactly what it was doing. NECC was conducting business like a manufacturer while being regulated as a pharmacy.

NECC began selling large shipments of drugs without prescriptions as early as 2009. That year, some health care providers who wanted the convenience of having their prescription drugs in stock—which helped them speed up how quickly they could see patients—had complained about NECC's prescription requirements. On September 15, 2010, Barry Cadden, the president and head pharmacist at NECC, sent an email to Robert Ronzio, the national sales manager, regarding a prospective client that was balking at the idea of assembling and providing all the prescription paperwork. Perhaps, Cadden said, NECC didn't need the prescriptions

but instead could just attach names to the orders at some point—even after the medications were injected. That way, if regulators checked, they would see every dosage linked to a patient.

“We must connect the patients to the dosage forms at some point in the process to prove that we are not a [manufacturer],” Cadden wrote. “They can follow up each month with a roster of actual patients and we can back-fill.”

There were two problems with that plan. First, it was illegal. Second, obtaining patient names from clinics and other medical providers after drugs had been injected was time-consuming. By the following year, some customers were just submitting the names of people on their staff, which Cadden thought was dangerous. “There are better ways to do this,” he wrote in a May 2, 2011, email. “Same names all the time makes no sense.”

NECC’s various schemes to get around the prescription requirement ran from the clever to the absurd. Some customers were exempted from sending names, while others provided names that were ridiculous. Big Baby Jesus was listed as having received an injection at a facility in San Marcos, Texas; so were Donald Trump, Calvin Klein, Jimmy Carter and Hugh Jass. A facility in Lincoln, Nebraska, placed orders for Silver Surfer, Hindsight Man, Octavius and Burt Reynolds. And orders came in from Elkhart, Indiana, for Filet O’Fish, Squeaky Wheel, Dingo Boney and Coco Puff.

That kind of silliness stirred up outrage back in Massachusetts. On March 20, 2012, Alla Stepanets, an NECC pharmacist, sent an email to a sales representative complaining about a customer saying that “[the] facility uses bogus patient names that are just ridiculous!” The sales representative replied that “[t]hese are RIDICULOUS.” But no matter—Stepanets told the sales representative the order was sent anyway.

By early 2012, St. Thomas Outpatient Neurosurgery Center had been an NECC customer for more than six months but had not yet been told of the need to provide patient names. It was then, according to court documents, that Giamei, the recently appointed regional sales manager, told Schamberg, the clinic's facility director, that the pharmacy needed to start receiving names with the outpatient center's drug orders.

That was impossible, she replied. There was no way to predict at the time of the order which patients would be receiving the drugs. That wouldn't be a problem, Giamei replied—NECC just needed a list of patient names. Schamberg consulted with the medical director, Dr. John Culclasure, and then a receptionist suggested printing out daily patient schedules and submitting those with each NECC order. That idea was put into practice right away, but still, just like at other clinics, employees at St. Thomas couldn't help but have a little fun—one of the patient names they submitted to NECC was Mickey Mouse, although no one at St. Thomas has been charged with wrongdoing.

The use of the cartoon character's name set off more anger at NECC. On May 21, 2012, Cadden, NECC's president, sent a steaming email to Sharon Carter, the director of operations. Carter added to the email, then printed it out and posted it in the office. "A facility can't continuously provide the same roster of names.....unless they are truly treating the exact same patients over and over again!" the email said, with all the ellipses. "All names must resemble 'real' names.....no obviously false names! (Mickey Mouse.)"

The Filthy Clean Room

That same day, as NECC executives were fuming about obviously fake names, a horror was unfolding just yards away from them in another part of the company's Framingham offices, one that ultimately would lead to the painful death of scores of patients.



Glenn Adam Chin, former supervisory pharmacist at the New England Compounding Center, departs federal court, September 11, 2014, in Boston. Prosecutors say Chin oversaw the sterile clean rooms at the New England Compounding Center in Framingham, Mass., which custom-mixed medications in bulk and where tainted steroids blamed for the 2012 outbreak were made. Credit: Steven Senne/AP

Even as Cadden was typing his angry email, Glenn A. Chin, a supervisory pharmacist at NECC, stepped over a dirty mat into an area known as the Clean Room. According to government charges, Chin prepared a 12.5-liter stock of the injectable steroid methylprednisolone acetate, which was labeled with the lot number 05212012@68. Proper sterilization procedures required exposing the drugs to high-pressure saturated steam at 121 degrees in an autoclave for at least 20 minutes.

Chin used the autoclave for only 15 minutes and four seconds, almost five minutes short of the minimum time required—a shortfall that, if extended over an eight-hour day, would allow for at least two extra batches of drugs to be produced. And this was not a one-time error; charges filed

by the government suggest that shortchanging the autoclave process was standard operating procedure at NECC.

There were plenty of reasons to fear that steaming the compounds for too little time was dangerous. Surface and air sampling for each of the prior 20 weeks had detected contamination in the air and on the surfaces of NECC's Clean Room—and even on the hands of Chin and other staffers. But NECC regularly and blatantly ignored the laws on decontamination, according to the government charges. Chin allegedly instructed subordinates to prioritize faster production over sterilization and ordered them to falsify documents to suggest they had cleaned areas when they had not.

There were other hazards in that Clean Room: a leaky boiler stood in a pool of stagnant water; powder hoods, which are designed to suck microscopic particles out of the room, were covered with dirt and fuzz; and the air intake came from vents that were about 30 yards from a dust-spewing recycling plant.



U.S. Rep. Ed Markey speaks at a news conference outside the New England Compounding Center in Framingham, Mass., November 1, 2012. Markey outlined a plan to more closely regulate compounding pharmacies like the NECC which is linked to a deadly nationwide meningitis outbreak.

Credit: Elise Amendola/AP

Still, these sloppy procedures alone did not put the public at risk. Under the law, once the manufacturing of a drug batch was completed, NECC was required to conduct a series of comprehensive tests to make sure the medication was sterile. For compounding pharmacies that follow the rules—making small quantities of drugs to fill individual prescriptions—the tests were hardly burdensome. But by illegally acting as a manufacturer and creating mass batches of drugs—while telling regulators it was mixing one order at a time—NECC had decided to simply ignore the safety check procedures. After all, how could a company comply with rules designed for testing five or six vials of drugs when it was illegally manufacturing thousands for sale all over the country?

And so Lot 05212012@68 was scarcely tested. Its safety was supposed to be verified by a process involving what is called a biological indicator; that rule was ignored. Also,

although the entire batch was required by law to be tested for sterility by an independent laboratory, Chin sent only 10 milliliters of drugs in two vials for analysis. On June 5, after the lab found that the first vial tested was sterile, officials at NECC declared the entire lot ready for shipment. In other words, the batch was deemed safe for injection into humans based on the testing of just 0.0004 percent of the total. This would be the equivalent of a grocery store deciding that all of its fruit is fresh after taking a bite of a single apple—except that customers can spot spoiled fruit on their own... and a rotten apple won't kill you.

On June 8, NECC started filling orders for injectable steroids from Lot 05212012@68. Over the next seven weeks, 6,500 vials of injectable steroids were shipped to customers around the country. St. Thomas Outpatient Neurosurgery Center's order of 500 vials was filled on June 27, 2012. Unknown to anyone, many of those tiny bottles carried a deadly fungus.

Thirty-three days later, on July 30, Thomas Rybinski, a 56-year-old autoworker from Smyrna, Tennessee, walked into Nashville's St. Thomas Hospital, a building of concrete and tinted glass that resembles a monstrous, ill-formed wedding cake. He took the elevator to the ninth floor and entered the office of St. Thomas Outpatient Neurosurgery Center. He had come for a steroid injection for chronic back pain caused by a degenerative disk disease.

In the exam room, a doctor screwed a needle onto a syringe, inserted it into a 1-milliliter vial of liquid steroid and pulled back the plunger to fill the syringe. Then he carefully slid the needle into Rybinski's back, near his spine. As the doctor slowly pushed down on the plunger, he was unknowingly injecting a microscopic fungus that had been floating unseen inside that contaminated vial.

Knowing He Would Soon Die

Dr. April Pettit was perplexed. The 34-year-old internist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville had

been reviewing the medical records of Rybinski, and nothing made sense. In late August, Rybinski had come to the hospital complaining of nausea and fatigue. After running blood tests, a spinal tap and a CAT scan, the medical team diagnosed him with a community-acquired meningitis. He was loaded up with antibiotics and sent home.

A week later, Rybinski's family brought him back to Vanderbilt. His speech was incomprehensible. He was agitated and suffering headaches. Another spinal tap was followed by intravenous antibiotics, and again Rybinski seemed on the mend. But on his sixth day at the hospital, he showed signs of seizures, and the right side of his face drooped.



Roseann Fusco shows the scar that is a result of her receiving a shot from the Marion Pain Management Center from the New England Compounding Company, for pain that she was suffering from a slipped disk in her neck on August 24, 2012. On September 9, 2012 she had symptoms of meningitis. She was in the hospital for three months and nearly died after contracting fungal meningitis. Credit: Doug Engle/Ocala Star-Banner/Landov

Pettit then had a thought—a long shot. Bacteria were the most frequent cause of meningitis, but could the problem here be a far rarer scenario of fungal meningitis? Pettit told the lab to reexamine Rybinski's spinal fluid, this time checking for fungus. The results came back positive for *Aspergillus fumigatus*, a fungus that looks like a monstrous dandelion and is usually found in decaying organic matter, like a compost heap. Yet somehow it was growing inside a Tennessee autoworker, and slowly killing him.

Pettit and other doctors went to Rybinski's family, quizzing them about anything unusual he might have done in the weeks before symptoms started appearing. Someone

mentioned the steroid injection at St. Thomas Outpatient Neurosurgery Center for his chronic back pain.

As the doctors worked on piecing the puzzle together, the fungus from NECC was tearing Rybinski apart. Brain tissue died as vessels that bathed the areas in blood became blocked or leaked. On his 11th day in the hospital, Rybinski abruptly became unresponsive and started shaking his head rhythmically. He was placed on a ventilator, but his brain started to swell. Doctors cut a hole in his skull and set up a catheter to drain excess liquid. He showed signs of an aneurysm and continued to have seizures.

At that same time, in another part of the hospital, 78-year-old Eddie Lovelace was barely clinging to life. He had suffered what seemed to be a mild stroke but had been expected to recover; then his health started to deteriorate. His family gathered by his hospital bed, knowing he would soon die but not knowing why. His 98-year-old mother telephoned him to say her goodbyes, telling her son that he was her “dear, sweet boy.”

On September 17, 2012—less than a month after his last steroid injection at St. Thomas Outpatient Neurosurgery Center—Eddie Lovelace died. Unknown to his doctors, he had been killed by fungal meningitis. He was the first victim of NECC’s heinous crimes, a link that wouldn’t be discovered for weeks.

The next day, unaware that a patient at Vanderbilt had just died from the same infection she had discovered in Rybinski, Pettit was still scrambling to deal with his rapidly deteriorating condition. She emailed the Tennessee Department of Health on September 18 with a copy of the lab results showing the fungal infection. State officials immediately asked for more information. Then they called St. Thomas Hospital—where the Outpatient Neurosurgery Center is based—and discovered doctors there were treating two other patients suffering from meningitis. Both patients had also received steroid injections.

As health officials in Tennessee scrambled, Giamei, the NECC regional sales manager, dropped by the St. Thomas outpatient center on September 24. According to court records, Schamberg, the facility director, and Culclasure, the medical director, spoke to him about the meningitis outbreak. "This could not possibly be coming from us," Giamei stated confidently, adding that NECC complied with all sterility procedures and had a state-of-the-art facility. Perhaps they should come for a visit to Framingham, he suggested, just to see the quality of the company.



*Shawn Lockhart looks at the meningitis-causing fungus *Exserohilum rostratum* at the mycotic lab at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on October 12, 2012 in Atlanta. Credit: Pouya Dianat/AP*

By the next day, September 25, state officials working alongside the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had identified eight patients with meningitis, all of whom had received steroid shots at the outpatient center. Health officials called NECC to inform it of the investigation and to identify the lot numbers of the steroids linked to the deaths, but NECC executives said there had been no other complaints about these drugs. Within 24 hours, state health agents in Massachusetts

raided NECC. They were horrified by what they saw. While a few employees were desperately scrubbing the Clean Rooms with bleach, the filthiness of the place could not be covered up. Every lot of NECC steroids suspected of being contaminated was recalled that day.

But it was too late. The next morning, September 27, officials at the CDC received the worst news possible—the outbreak was not limited to Tennessee. State health officials in North Carolina called to report that a patient at High Point Regional Hospital was suffering from meningitis with the same symptoms as the Tennessee patients. The patient, Elwina Shaw, had received a steroid injection a few weeks before at the High Point Surgery Center, a NECC customer.

The day after health officials reported her condition, Shaw suffered a stroke. And less than a day later, Thomas Rybinski, the autoworker whose case first alerted health authorities to the emerging crisis, died at Vanderbilt Hospital.



FDA-OCI agents entered New England Compounding Center (NECC) in Framingham, Mass., Oct. 16, 2012. Credit: Barry Chin/The Boston Globe/Getty

Dressed and Ready to Go to Jail

The NECC meningitis outbreak sickened and killed patients in 20 states. The worst hit was Michigan, with 264 cases and 19 deaths. Tennessee had the next worst toll, with 153 cases that left 16 people dead. Hundreds of lawsuits were filed—against NECC, its executives, their related companies, the outpatient centers and the hospitals. NECC filed for bankruptcy in December 2012, and the court issued two rulings enjoining the executives and owners from moving their money. Almost immediately after the first order was handed down, Carla Conigliaro, the majority shareholder of NECC, and her husband, Douglas Conigliaro, transferred \$33.3 million to banks in a series of 18 transactions in violation of the court's instructions, according to the government indictment.

By the fall of 2014, NECC's once-respected executives and pharmacists knew they faced criminal prosecution for a wide range of serious offenses. On September 4, Glenn Chin, the supervising pharmacist, was arrested at Boston's Logan Airport as he prepared to board a flight with his family for Hong Kong. Then, on December 17, federal agents launched a series of pre-dawn raids, arresting 14 NECC executives, owners and staffers. Cadden, the company's president, was dressed and waiting when law enforcement officials reached his door; he was expecting them and had climbed out of bed at 4 a.m. so he would be ready to go when they knocked on his door.

In U.S. District Court in Boston, all 14 defendants pleaded not guilty to a wide assortment of crimes, including racketeering, fraud, conspiracy, violating federal drug laws and financial crimes. Only Cadden and Chin have been charged with murder. They face a maximum sentence of life in prison if convicted on all counts.



Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

NEW YORK CITY WOULD REALLY RATHER NOT TALK ABOUT ITS SLAVERY-LOVING PAST

**NEW YORK CITY WAS A PLACE THAT FACILITATED
BONDAGE WHILE PREACHING FREEDOM.**

It was the summer of 1863, and Abraham Lincoln needed troops. That March, Congress had passed the Enrollment Act, requiring all males between the ages of 20 and 45 to register for a military draft. Since that May, Ulysses S.

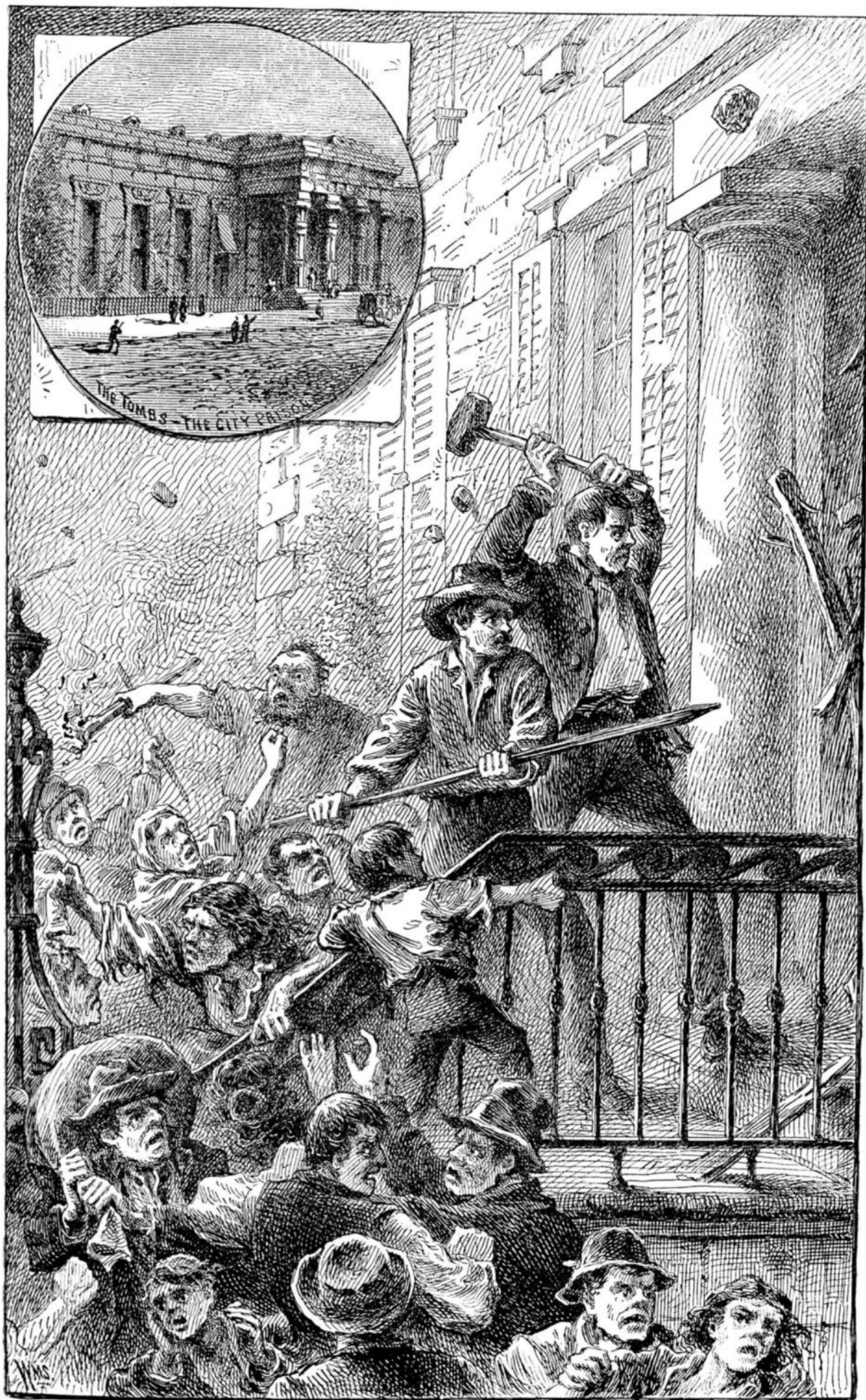
Grant laid costly siege to the city of Vicksburg, Mississippi, a strategic Confederate fort on the Mississippi River; by June, there would be 80,000 Union soldiers surrounding that city. In late April, “Fighting Joe” Hooker crossed the Rappahannock River, trying to catch Robert E. Lee in a pincer movement. The maneuver failed and the Union lost 17,000 men at the ensuing Battle of Chancellorsville, perhaps Lee’s finest victory. Just two months later, Lee suffered his worst defeat, at Gettysburg. Though victorious there, the Union lost 23,000 men.

The draft began in New York City about two weeks after Gettysburg. The draft would do what all drafts do, which is compel men who do not have the natural constitution of a warrior to become one anyway. You could avoid it by paying \$300. Otherwise, you would don the Union blue.

The first day of the draft, Saturday the 11th, went well. The second, Monday the 13th, was a disaster. The Irish had not wanted to work alongside blacks on the docks of Manhattan. They had even less interest in fighting what some called “the nigger war,” so that, presumably, emancipated blacks could come north and take their jobs. Their anger first erupted at the draft offices near today’s United Nations headquarters on the East Side of Manhattan. “The men seemed to be excited beyond expression,” **reported The New York Times**. The mob “danced with fiendish delight” as it set buildings aflame and attacked blacks, killing dozens.

On the second day, the rioters set upon a four-story house at 339 West 29th Street, in what is today the Manhattan neighborhood of Chelsea. Here, on what was then known as Lamartine Place, stood the graceful home of Quaker abolitionists James Sloan Gibbons and Abigail Hopper Gibbons. It was, according to their friend Joseph H. Choate, “a great resort of abolitionists and extreme anti-slavery people from all parts of the land.” The Hopper-Gibbons house was a known stop on the Underground Railroad, a

network of routes and safe houses that, in the first half of the 19th century, whisked runaway slaves across the Mason-Dixon Line. Choate reports that he dined there with William Lloyd Garrison. Present at the dinner was “a jet-black negro who was on his way to freedom.”



1. THE REIGN OF TERROR DURING THE DRAFT RIOTS IN NEW YORK.—THE INFURIATED MOB ATTACKING MRS. GIBBON'S HOUSE. 2. THE TOMBS, THE CITY PRISON.

An Illustration depicts a mob attacking the home of Abigail Hopper Gibbons (at 339 West 29th Street) during the New York City draft riots, New York. Credit: Interim Archives/Getty

Two men on horseback led the mob to the Hopper-Gibbons house. “The horsemen stopped one at each side of the courtyard and allowed about a dozen men with pickaxes into the house while the kept the rest of the mob back,” **writes the historian Iver Bernstein**. “Finally the advance team was joined by the throng without.” Books were set on fire, art destroyed, furniture defenestrated. Troops fought off the rioters, but after the troops left, the rioters returned.

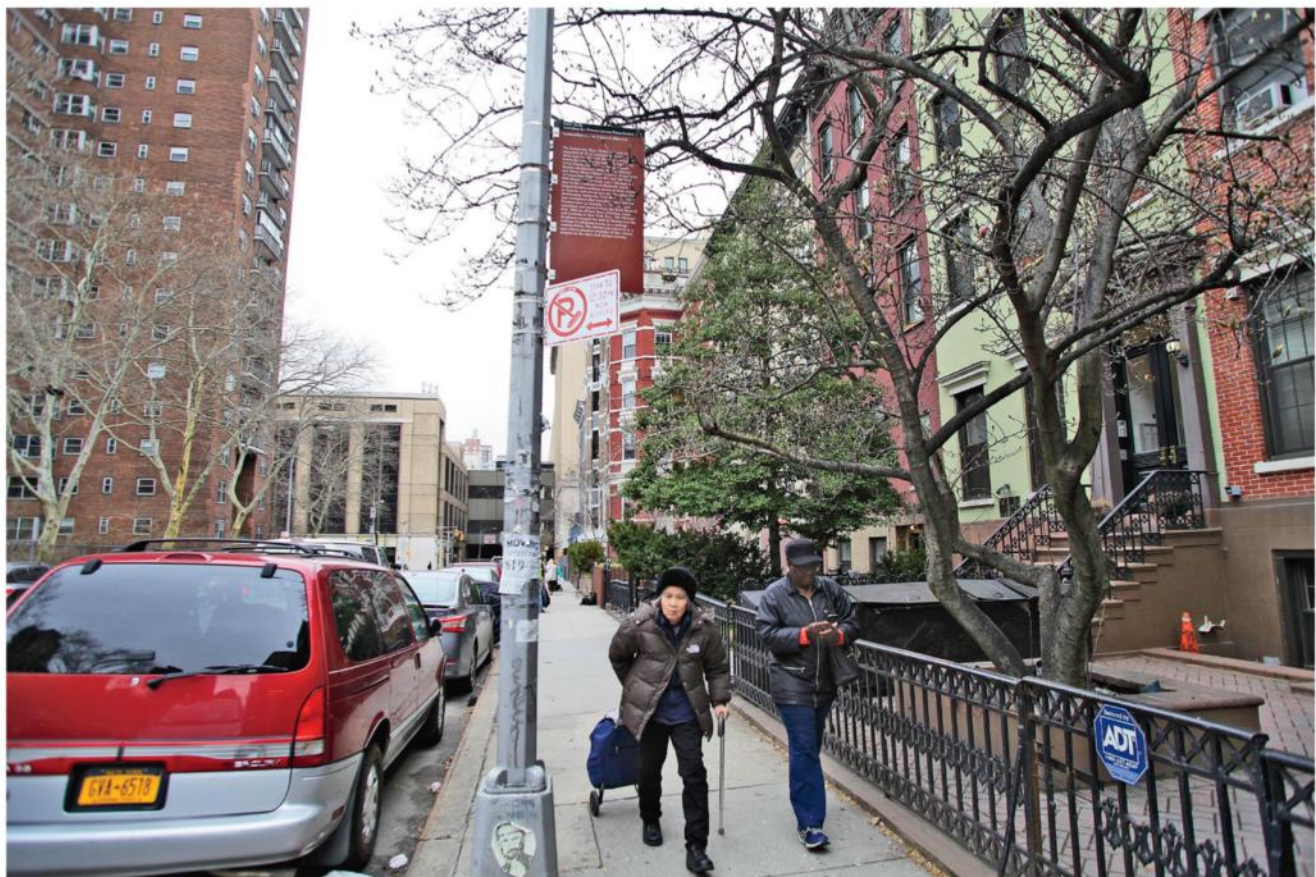
Choate came to the rescue by “the merest accident.” He had gone to see if there was “trouble in the negro quarters,” only to stumble on the chaos in front of the Gibbons house. One resident of the block, he would later report, had already been “killed in remonstrating with the crowd” (that neighbor, Daniel Wilson, actually appears to have survived the severe beating). Choate went inside but found only pillaging rioters. Nobody from the Hopper-Gibbons clan was there; but two doors down, at the residence of Samuel and Rachel Brown, two Gibbons daughters, Julia and Lucy, lay in hiding. They “threw themselves into my arms,” Choate wrote, “almost swooning.”

It was too dangerous to take the girls down to the street, so Choate went up instead, “over a dozen adjoining roofs,” through the house of Esther and Henry Herrman (**other historians** hold that they descended through the Hebrew Orphans Asylum; in either case, they had sympathetic Jews to thank). Choate had a carriage waiting. He and the Gibbons daughters made it safely to his house on 21st Street. The riots were finally quelled that Thursday, July 16, in part by troops who had fought at Gettysburg.

Today, the Hopper-Gibbons house is covered in funereal construction mesh. It was bought in 2004 by developer Tony Mamounas; the following year, he sought to build a penthouse atop the four-story structure and was granted permission to do so by the Buildings Department. The city first told Mamounas to stop building in 2009; that same year, the Landmarks Preservation Commission created

the **Lamartine Place Historic District**, which includes the remaining huddle of rowhouses on 29th Street. The Hopper-Gibbons house fell under the district's auspices, making any further alterations difficult. Mamounas appealed, and there followed a flurry of court motions and recriminations. Finally, **the appellate division of the state Supreme Court ruled against Mamounas this February**. If the ruling stands, the penthouse will have to come down.

What will remain, in that case, is just another nice building for people who can afford nice things. Mamounas is hardly the villain here; to build and build higher is a primal Gotham urge. He could have been more tactful in dealing with the local preservationists who mounted the campaign against him. He could have also been more blunt. New York is not a city, he might have pointed out, that succumbs easily to history. Or to guilt. Yes, the aforementioned Joseph Choate had heard of a black man lynched on the corner of Sixth Avenue and 32nd Street. And now there stands the Manhattan Mall. You call it forgetting, I call it progress.



People walk past a sign indicating the history of Lamartine Place near the former Hopper-Gibbons House at 339 W 29th St. in Manhattan on April 8, 2015. Credit: Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

There is, at least, a sign. Courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, it hangs from a lamppost on 29th Street and explains the history of the block once known as Lamartine Place. It is, as far as I know, the only acknowledgment of the Draft Riots on any kind of historical marker in the city. No historian I spoke to could think of any commemoration more significant. So, if the city itself has to exert no more effort than to stamp out a single sign on a metal sheet the size of a cafeteria tray, then why should Mamounas have to sacrifice his penthouse? Is a small-time real estate developer really to bear the full weight of history?

The battle over the Hopper-Gibbons House is instructive of a broader New York attitude toward slavery and abolition. That era seems almost too complex for us to remember, eluding the easy narratives of triumph and redemption while calling into question New York's liberal self-image. Kenneth T. Jackson, a Columbia University professor widely regarded as the preeminent historian of New York City, points out that while Southern cities like Charleston, South Carolina, unequivocally supported slavery and New England ones like Boston thoroughly opposed it, New York was probably the most ideologically conflicted urban center in the nation. Jackson surmised that New York's complicity in the slave trade remains an "unpleasant topic" to this day. It is not the kind of conversation we can conduct with a well-meaning Starbucks barista. But we will have to have it sooner or later. "There is no future," Jackson warns, "in denying the past."

Yet even as its hold on us expires, history manages to intrude like the aggrieved ghost of Hamlet's father. Prithi Kanakamedala is a historian who organized the "**In Pursuit of Freedom**" exhibition at the Brooklyn Historical Society last year. She teaches at the Bronx Community College, where 90 percent of the students are either black or Hispanic. Kanakamedala says her students always perk up when learning about the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which gave

great leverage to Southern states in the apprehension and return of runaway slaves. The law, Kanakamedala's students tell her, "sounds just like stop-and-frisk."

Burned Alive or Hanged

On a cold afternoon in February, I set out from the Newsweek offices at the dagger-point of lower Manhattan and walked north, up the crooked spine of the island that is Broadway. My goal was to see as much as possible of the city's obscured legacy of slavery and abolition. There had been [a slave market on Wall Street](#), abolitionist newspapers where Tribeca is, villages for free blacks in Brooklyn. A patch of Greenwich Village was once known as "The Land of the Blacks." What still remained of all this, in a 21st century metropolis tumescent with glass and steel?

In his recent book [Gateway to Freedom](#), Columbia University historian and Pulitzer Prize-winner Eric Foner makes two compelling arguments. First, that even after slavery was abolished in New York State in 1827, "the South's peculiar institution remained central to the city's economic prosperity," with money and goods freely crossing the Mason-Dixon Line. But despite its pro-South impulses, the city also became "a crucial way station in the metropolitan corridor through which fugitive slaves made their way from the upper South through Philadelphia and on to upstate New York, New England and Canada." It was a place that facilitated bondage while preaching freedom.

Foner's book, by turns scholarly and gripping, includes a map of places in Manhattan and Brooklyn related to the abolitionist enterprise. The map shows 18 sites in Manhattan and five in Brooklyn. I chose what I thought were the most relevant places highlighted by Foner while adding a couple of my own.



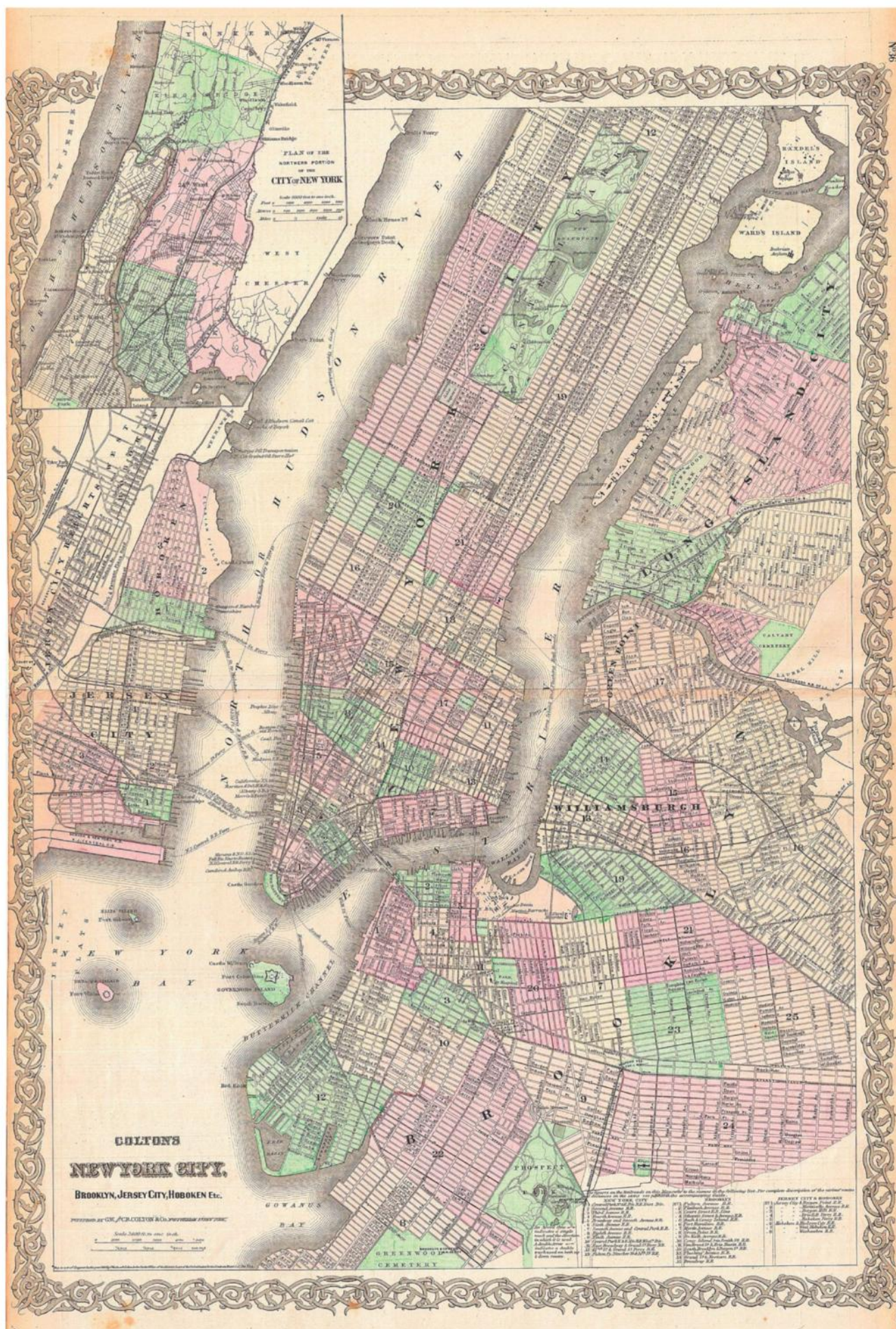
A man looks at a display of photographs showing graves at the African Burial Ground Memorial Site, March 1, 2006 in the Lower Manhattan area of New York. Credit: Stan Honda/AFP/Getty

My first stop was the African Burial Ground, just north of City Hall. It is, ironically enough, across the street from the U.S. Court of International Trade, the name alluding with sad irony to brigs packed with shackled Africans. The first slaves—11 men—were brought to the Dutch colony of Nieuw Amsterdam in 1626; two years later, three female slaves arrived. They were all owned by the West India Company, which gave them **the right to earn wages, marry and own some property.**

The British assumed control of New York in 1664 and quickly proved more zealous (and cruel) slave masters, so that by the end of the 18th century, there were 10,727 blacks in what is today New York City and Westchester County, with 77.3 percent of them slaves. “New Yorkers later prided themselves on the notion that in contrast to southern slavery, theirs have been a mild and relatively benevolent

institution,” Foner writes. “But New York slavery could be no less brutal than in colonies to the south.” Ninety years before Nat Turner tore through Southampton County, Virginia, in a furious fight for freedom, the “Negro Plot” of 1741 supposedly aimed for New York’s fiery destruction. In the panicked “investigation” that followed, some 30 blacks were burned alive or hanged. Four white accomplices were also executed.

Death, for enslaved Africans, only perpetuated the injustices of life. In 1697, the British masters of New York forbade the burial of blacks in the cemetery of Trinity Church. African burials were conducted outside the settlement’s limits, in what would come to be known as “Negros Buriel Ground.” After the burial ground was closed in 1794, it was covered up, and the city grew above it.



An 1865 map of New York City by mapmaker G. Woolworth Colton

Credit: .

We rarely think of New York as a slaveholding city, but it had more slaves than any other city except Charleston. Foner writes that on “the eve of the War of

Independence...some 20,000 slaves lived within 50 miles of Manhattan island, the largest concentration of unfree laborers north of the Mason-Dixon Line.” Brooklyn was even worse than Manhattan: In 1771, one-third of its population was slave.

By the late 20th century, the site had succumbed the most mundane of modern uses: a parking lot. In 1990, the city sold the land to the General Services Administration (GSA), which set about constructing the Ted Weiss Federal Building. During excavations the following year, 419 bodies were found at a depth of 24 feet. As the history of the site came to light, black activists enjoined the GSA to preserve the ancient cemetery. Wondered the Brooklyn firebrand Charles Barron, a former Black Panther, “Do they then own the remains of your parents because they own the land?”



A man inspects a skeleton at the site of the earliest African American cemetery found in Lower Manhattan in New York, in October 1991. Credit: J A Giorano/SABA/Corbis

The African Burial Ground is now a national monument a third of an acre in size; the original cemetery, at 6.6 acres, was approximately 22 times that size. The remains of the slaves were re-interred there in 2003; in 2010, a visitors

center opened, a jagged ship's prow of somber black stone rising from the ground. The Weiss building looms above the ancient cemetery like an annoyed sibling, much younger but much bigger. Reviewing the opening, [a critic for The New York Times noted](#) that the memorial "makes the past seem like an excision, a resurrection of an alien time and place, a reminder of what lies deep underfoot." Above all, the memorial has the feel of a grudging concession. I, for one, can't think of another museum that devotes so much narrative space to the story of its own creation. Then again, how many institutions can claim to have won a battle against the relentless force that is New York real estate?

The Eternal Indignities

Those who wish to preserve the physical evidence of history always fight a losing battle. Against them are aligned money and time, political avarice and public apathy, not to mention the eternal indignities of gravity and rust. Just one of these forces is usually enough to doom a building for which only the sentimentalist and the historian have any affection.



A commemorative plaque indicating historical ties to the Underground Railroad hangs outside 36 Lispenard Street in Manhattan's TriBeCa neighborhood, April 8, 2015. Credit: Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

Still, traces remain, even in this city increasingly dominated by hedge funders and foreign billionaires who have so much of the world's money but so little of its culture. At 36 Lispenard Street, in the Tribeca neighborhood, stands the former house of David Ruggles, an African-American abolitionist described by Foner in *Gateway to Freedom* as the “leader of a network with connections to anti-slavery activists in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New England and upstate New York.” One of the nation's first black journalists (he published a magazine called the *Mirror of Liberty*) and founder of the anti-slavery New York Committee of Vigilance, Ruggles “scoured the wharfs, on the lookout for fugitive slaves.” Today, there is a plaque affixed to the side of the building where he lived and, in 1838, welcomed Frederick Douglass, who was then a runaway slave.

Ruggles's building remains intact. The bottom floor is a La Colombe Torrefaction coffee shop, its fashionable patrons buzzing about in the glorious refulgence of a winter

afternoon. The excellent urban exploration site Untapped Cities **had a barista confirm** that the basement of the building was “original.” Unsure of what that meant, I asked to see it. A manager readily complied. She took me through the café’s kitchen, down into the drafty basement. Three stone arches did seem, quite obviously, to have been part of the original structure. Behind one these was a small grotto filled with electrical equipment. Once, maybe slaves had cowered there. There is no way to know.



The basement of the present-day La Colombe Torrefaction at 36 Lispenard St. in Manhattan's Tribeca Neighborhood, pictured April 8, 2015.

Credit: Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

Back upstairs, the cool coffee kids were busy with their iPads and Moleskines. A barista told me she had been stunned to learn of the building’s history, a revelation she earnestly deemed “epic.” I fantasized for days thereafter about being her history teacher.

At 2 White Street was the home of black abolitionist Theodore S. Wright, born a free black and educated at the Princeton Theological Seminary. He warned against those who condemned slavery but did nothing to improve the lot of African-Americans. “It is an easy thing to ask about the

vileness of slavery at the South,” he said in an 1837 speech, “but to call the dark man a brother...to treat the man of color in all circumstances as a man and brother—that is the test.”

A two-story affair of brick and wood just south of Canal Street’s ceaseless bustle, the house reminds of a half-bucolic gentility long gone from Manhattan. It turned out that 2 White was an old friend, though one whom it took a moment to recognize. It had once been home to the Liquor Store, a bar so unassuming it didn’t even assume a name, keeping the marquee of the bygone spirit-purveyor. It was, until its death in 2006, one those dusty, dusky spots that are quickly disappearing from the scrubbed face of the city, replaced by “speakeasies” where mixologists work with the solemnity of biochemists. When my friends and I drank there in the early aughts, the Liquor Store was an unpretentious place for people, like myself, who had great pretensions about life in New York but didn’t have the money to live them out. So we drank Bud Light and dreamt.



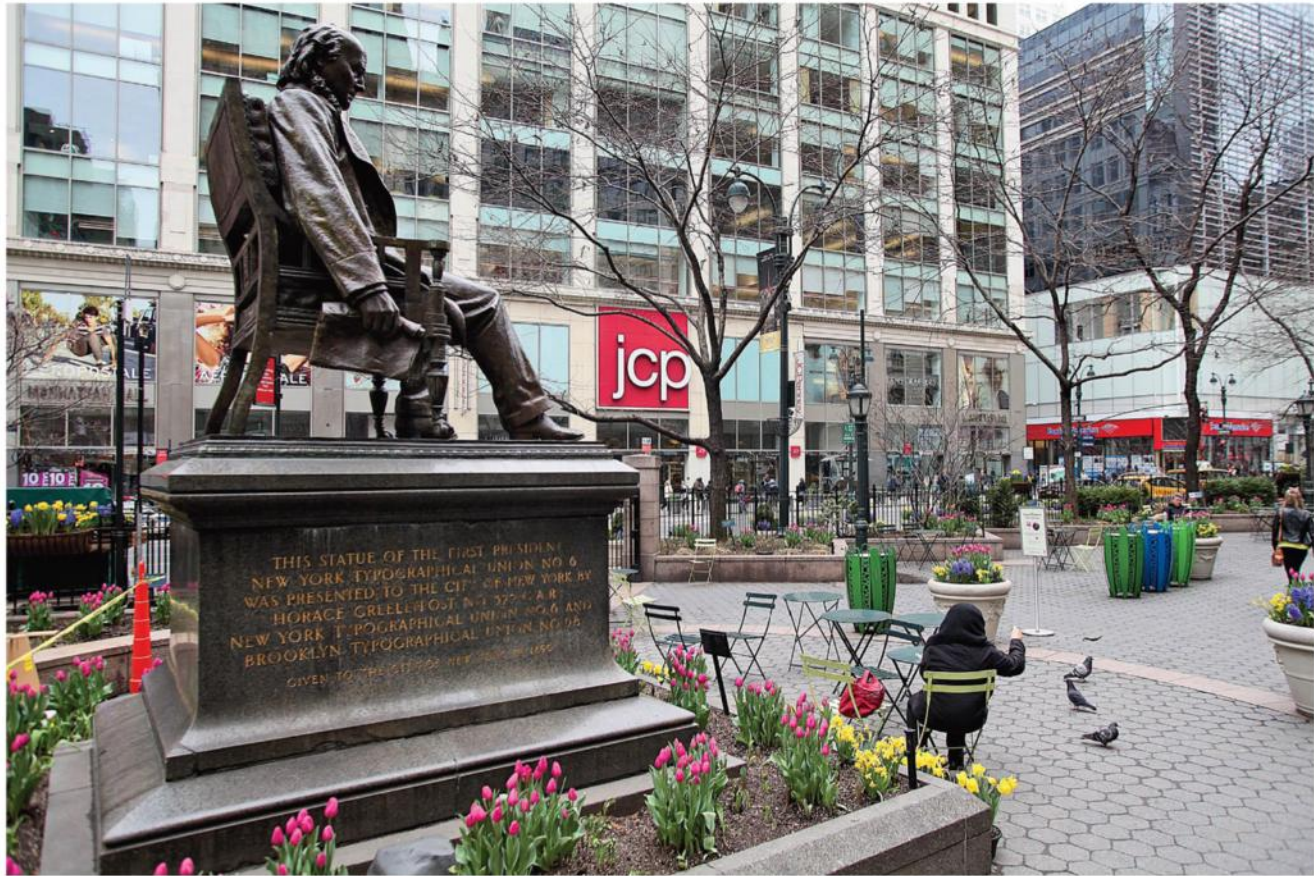
Pedestrians walk by a building at 2 White St. in Manhattan, April 9, 2015. Credit: Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

Now, the building that once belonged to Wright and later belonged to Jim Beam belongs to J. Crew. Though the interior remains handsome, the feel of invasion hangs in the air like Justin Bieber cologne. “We’ve taken over the old Liquor Store,” a J. Crew website proclaims, noting that the building is an “1825 townhouse” and that the “original wood bar is still intact.” There is no mention of Wright’s work. Today, a suit at J. Crew might run you \$400; in 1850, that was the price of a slave.

I left Tribeca and headed for Greenwich Village, where there was once a settlement called Little Africa, a refuge for blacks that had strategic value for whites who did not yet possess the whole island of Manhattan. “The Dutch chose to settle the families of former slaves on this land in order to protect the town from incursions by Native Americans,” **notes historian Andrew S. Dolkart**. “The Africans would serve as a buffer and would be the first settlers attacked during a raid.” But the black settlement survived, becoming the largest of its kind by the midpoint of the 19th century.

And now it is gone, replaced by bars that cater to students from NYU and “authentic” Italian restaurants that cater to tourists from Palookaville. Minetta Street, whose charming curve is a wormhole of serenity, was once known as **the Negroes’ Causeway**. Today, it is a shortcut to Macdougall Street, which Bob Dylan once roamed. This is where he wrote “Blowin’ in the Wind,” in a coffee shop called the Commons, which later became The Fat Black Pussycat and is now a Mexican joint called Panchito’s. This is what that song says: “How many years can some people exist / Before they're allowed to be free?”

Centuries, it turns out.



A statue of Horace Greeley sits in Horace Greeley Square in midtown Manhattan on April 8, 2015. Credit: Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

After a visit to the Hopper-Gibbons House on 29th Street, I headed for the heart of Midtown. Greeley Square Park is where Broadway meets Sixth Avenue, near where Macy's proclaims itself the world's largest store and where a malevolent chaos has always held sway. Horace Greeley edited the New-York Tribune, which Foner calls "the nation's most important antislavery newspaper." Its offices had been among the targets of the Draft Riots mob. A statue of Greeley presides over the din, but he looks less like the master of the square than a Rip Van Winkle figure emerging, bewildered, into modernity. He'd have no trouble recognizing our own conflicts, though. Macy's, which dominates the area, **recently paid \$650,000 to settle a claim that it discriminated against black shoppers.**

Kidnappers and Slave Catchers

James P. Hurley was giving a walking tour of Bedford-Stuyvesant when someone threw a bottle at his head. Hurley, who is white, wanted to highlight the rich history and architectural splendor of the neighborhood. In 1964, there

had been rioting there and in Harlem over a white police officer's shooting of a black teenager. The neighborhood, once a bastion of black gentility, was beginning its decades-long descent into gangs, drugs, no jobs and bad schools.

After the thrown bottle, Hurley stopped giving tours of Bedford-Stuyvesant and instead began teaching a seminar about Bedford-Stuyvesant history at the Pratt Institute Department of Community Development. In 1968, he was approached by Joseph H. Haynes, who had grown up in Bed-Stuy and now worked as a subway engineer. Haynes wanted to show Hurley the lost neighborhood of Weeksville.



The Hunterfly Road houses of Weeksville, Brooklyn, pictured April 7, 2015. Credit: Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

Hurley had been hunting for Weeksville for some time, after first spotting a reference to this community of landowning blacks in a 19th century history of Brooklyn by Eugene L. Armbruster. The community had been founded in 1838 by former slave James Weeks and other African-Americans who bought the rural parcels of land, then sold them to brethren. Foner notes that the neighborhood, far from Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn, “offered a

modicum of safety from kidnappers and slave catchers.” As the historian Judith Wellman tells it in [Brooklyn’s Promised Land](#), the most thorough history of Weeksville to date, the little village would grow to become the second biggest community of free blacks in antebellum America (the largest was in Carthagen, Ohio).

Hurley hadn’t been able to learn much about Weeksville. The neighborhood seemed lost, just another victim to New York’s relentless regeneration. The commonly repeated narrative has Hurley and Haney spotting Weeksville from an airplane the latter was piloting over the central Brooklyn area known as Crow Hill. Hurley, who is now 86 years old and lives near Cooperstown, New York, says that “just isn’t true,” though he remembers a subsequent flight during which Haney took photos of Weeksville with one hand while piloting the airplane with the other. Yet it was an astounding discovery all the same. In the shadows of the massive Kingsborough Houses public housing project stood a dilapidated cluster of houses, on a diagonal strip called Hunterfly Road that had somehow evaded the grid imposed on the city in the early 19th century and survived more recent attempts at “urban renewal.”

Here was Weeksville.



A photograph taken in the early 1970s shows community archaeological excavation and education workshops being conducted at the Hunterfly Road Site, in Weeksville, Brooklyn. Credit: Weeksville Heritage Center

“What we found may not look like much,” **Hurley** **said in 1969 to The New York Times**, which reported that archaeological digs of Weeksville were being conducted by “dozens of Boy Scouts, local merchants, parents and school children.” The motley crew managed to not only save the four houses from demolition but get them on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. The 1980s and ’90s were as unkind to this strip as they were to the rest of New York. There were fires, vandals. Local students donated coins. Somehow the houses survived.

Much like the African Burial Ground, Weeksville feels out of place, intruding on the endless jigsaw puzzle of housing projects that dominates the area. Many of the residents of the adjacent Kingsborough Houses—which only make the news for drugs, guns and gangs—are only three or four generations removed from the tea plantations

of South Carolina, the pecan groves of Georgia. Whether these descendants of slaves deserve recompense for the atrocities inflicted on their ancestors is one of the great unresolved questions of American society. That question seems especially pressing here.

In late 2013, the Weeksville Heritage Center opened. It is a handsome, modern building, a gleaming new thing in a neighborhood where most things are old and broken. But it is not without its troubles: Weeksville has struggled to raise money and make itself a draw to visitors. The center's sunny new director, Tia Powell Harris, says that while the center attracts tourists from places like Sweden and China, it has struggled to get local African-Americans through its doors. They do not feel, she says, like it is theirs.



A tintype portrait, taken circa 1875, of an unidentified female resident of the historically African American neighborhood of Weeksville in Brooklyn, N.Y. Credit: The Granger Collection

This is especially lamentable because Weeksville is a lesson in self-empowerment, a deviation from the

usual victimhood narrative of slavery. Kanakamedala, the Bronx Community College professor, says places like Weeksville remind that the story of African Americans in the 19th century is about more than just bondage. Unwilling to subsist on “lofty ideas of freedom” alone, says Kanakamedala, the blacks of Weeksville sought home ownership and voting rights as means of personal advancement that, at the same time, incrementally improved the social standing of the race. Their struggle may have been quotidian, but that does not make it inconsequential.

But while Weeksville yearns for the cultural limelight, at least it isn't facing oblivion. The same isn't true on Abolitionist Place in downtown Brooklyn, where a sad scattering of 19th century houses may be one of the city's most trenchant links to the abolitionist movement. It is right off the Fulton Mall, the last commercial strip in Brownstone Brooklyn (i.e., white Brooklyn) that caters to blacks. But gentrification is coming to this cheerfully scruffy strip. Glass boxes are rising everywhere, and high-end chains like Shake Shack are eagerly following in their wake.



Lewis Greenstein points to buildings on Duffield St. in Brooklyn, New York, which once contained a system of tunnels that hid escaped slaves, on April 9, 2015. Credit: Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

Abolitionist Place is already home to two hotel towers, with a third in the making. The trio is so hideous, it would give Houston nightmares. In the shadows of these immodest abominations are two humble buildings: 233 Duffield Street, a three-story affair of caramel-colored wood slats, and 227 Duffield Street, whose three stories are a confusion of styles and colors. A window spans nearly the entire length of 227's ground floor, and there are faded posters facing out to the street. This was once a hair salon. Now, it is a museum of the most rudimentary kind (no admission charge, but also no actual admission).

The posters tell an incredible story, one that the two houses' erstwhile owners fought, without success, to have the city acknowledge: that the Duffield houses are the last evidence of a system of tunnels and caverns that hid runaway slaves and helped whisk them to safety. "The floor is still earthen," [a reporter for The Brooklyn Rail wrote during a 2007 visit to 227 Duffield Street](#). "The two side walls are lined with cool gray flagstones. The uniformity of the stones' pattern is interrupted about three yards from the front of the building. There...a worn wooden beam...separates the wall from an arch that is bordered with stone. Beyond the arch, a new pattern of red brick covers the rest of the wall."

Elsewhere, these may just have been architectural curios. But the house at 227 was occupied by the abolitionists Thomas and Harriet Lee Truesdell. The owners of the two buildings believed the tunnels may have served as a secret passage from Duffield Street to the nearby Bridge Street African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church. Yes, this is a fanciful notion. But the past often seems preposterous, and all history, whether conducted by professionals or amateurs, is an act of imagination. The fewer the facts, the more the imagination fills in.

But the New York of Mayor Michael Bloomberg was not a New York to go weak in the knees for historical

fantasies. The city hired an archeological firm, AKRF, to investigate; it found, according to [a New York Times report](#), “no conclusive proof” that the Duffield houses had been part of the Underground Railroad. So that was that.

The owner of 227 Duffield, Joy Chatel, passed away in the winter of 2014, and the fate of her building remains unclear. The other building has been sold, and will soon come down. “We were surrounded by all these hotels,” explains former owner Lewis Greenstein. “We had to get out.”



Officials, including New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg (R red tie), stand behind four coffins containing the remains of free and enslaved African-Americans, October 3, 2003, after they arrived at Pier 11 on Wall Street, a colonial-era disembarkation point for slave ships in New York.

Credit: Stan Honda/AFP/Getty

Foner told me that as he has gone around the country, lecturing about Gateway to Freedom, audiences are invariably surprised to learn that “New York was very closely tied into the South,” that Southerners would vacation in New York City with their slaves, that before Brooks Brothers became a symbol of patrician propriety, it provided clothing for slaves. New Yorkers, too, have been hesitant to learn of their city’s past. “We are tolerant and we are

multicultural,” says Foner, a lifelong New Yorker. “The Statue of Liberty is our image of ourselves.” He notes, also, how strange it is that we have a national museum commemorating the Holocaust, but not one commemorating slavery.

I left shabby Duffield Street and walked east, into graceful Brooklyn Heights. There, at 86 Pierrepont Street, stood a house that once belong to Lewis Tappan, one of the city’s most ardent abolitionists and a central figure in the case of *La Amistad*, a Spanish slave ship on which in 1839 the captive Africans staged a successful mutiny (in the Steven Spielberg film *Amistad*, Tappan is played by Stellan Skarsgård).

I saw no sign of Tappan having lived here; if there is a plaque, it must be very well hidden. An online listing for a rental apartment in the building put the rent at \$2,375, lauding the unit’s dishwasher and “excellent light.” You could live there very happily without knowing anything of the building’s past. And many surely have. Would their fleeting months or years at 86 Pierrepont—romances, breakups, dinner parties, lazy Sundays—have been somehow enriched by the presence of a plaque?



Pedestrians walk by a statue of Horace Greeley in Horace Greeley Square in midtown Manhattan on April 8, 2015. Credit: Jared T. Miller for Newsweek

If remembrance is to be more than just a history-class platitude, then it requires sacrifice, of space both physical and mental. The two cataracts on the footprint of the World Trade Center demand attention by dint of their enormous size alone: Millions of feet of commercial real estate were ceded to the National September 11 Memorial and Museum. But that usurpation, by itself, is no moral victory. The crushing sound of water, the square abyss, the names etched into granite, these all summon that morning and the profound associations—personal, political, whatever—that 9/11 continues to have. The city gave up this physical space so that you, in turn, give up some of your mental space to think about the 3,000 lives lost on that day. The **outrage over people taking selfies there** is rooted in the recognition that this contract has been flagrantly, mirthfully breached.

And what of the thousands of lives lost by black New Yorkers throughout the centuries of American slavery? The city has given up very little space for them, though they, too, suffered and died at the mercy of forces that move through

flesh and bone like a shock wave, invisible and inexorable. Like the victims of 9/11, the slaves of New York were actors in the great mercantile drama that daily animates the city. But they were unwilling actors. And when they died, nobody plastered posters with their faces in subway stations. Nobody read their names at memorials, and nobody etched their names in stone.

They went into oblivion. But they don't have to stay there.



Andrey Kuzmin/Reuters

WHAT SANCTIONS? THE RUSSIAN ECONOMY IS GROWING AGAIN

**NOT ONLY IS RUSSIA'S PRESIDENT, VLADIMIR PUTIN,
STILL STANDING, BUT THE RUSSIAN ECONOMY,
AGAINST MOST EXPECTATIONS, IS ACTUALLY
RECOVERING.**

Six months ago, the price of oil—the lifeblood of the Russian economy—began to crater, and U.S.-led sanctions, implemented in the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea in Ukraine, were biting. Russia's currency, the ruble,

buckled, and capital flight began to accelerate as rich but nervous Russians moved more and more money out of the country. It seemed plausible then to wonder: Could Vladimir Putin be losing his grip? Might economic pressure be enough to rein him in, or even lead to his downfall?

Today, the answer is becoming clear—and it's not the one the West was hoping for. Not only is Putin still standing, but the Russian economy, against most expectations, is recovering. Its stock market is one of the best performing globally this year; the ruble, after losing nearly half its value against the dollar over the course of a year, is rebounding; interest rates have come down from their post-sanctions peak; the government is taking in more revenue than its own forecast expected; and foreign exchange reserves have risen nearly \$10 billion from their post-crisis low.

The lower price of oil still hurts. Citicorp economists estimate that every \$10 decline in the price of Brent crude shaves 2 percent from Russia's gross domestic product (GDP). Further declines—not out of the question, given that Saudi Arabia, the world's largest and lowest-cost producer, is still pumping record amounts of crude—will crimp growth even more. But those same Citicorp economists forecast that GDP, after contracting for the past 18 months, could now begin to grow at up to 3.5 percent per year, even without a recovery in crude prices.

What explains this resilience? Consider the city of Cherepovets, where 300,000 people live in the northwestern area known as Vologda. It is dreary, gray and industrial—almost stereotypically so. The major employer in town is a steelmaker born in the Soviet era. In the wake of the sanctions and the plunge in the price of oil, Cherepovets would be one of the more unlikely industrial cities in the world to be thriving.

But thriving it is. In the last quarter of 2014, the hometown steelmaker, Severstal, posted its strongest profit margins in six years, on record output. On April 9,

the company signed a contract to supply rolled steel to a Renault-Nissan auto plant, a facility that plans to increase exports from Russia to the former Soviet republics, the Middle East and Africa.

Though better run than many Russian firms, Severstal is not an outlier. According to data from Bloomberg, some 78 percent of Russian companies on the MICEX index showed greater revenue growth in the most recent quarter than their global peers did. And Russian companies on the whole are now more profitable than their peers on the MSCI Emerging Markets index.

What's bailing out Moscow? For the second time in two decades, Russia is showing that while a sharp drop in its currency's value does bring financial pain—it raises prices for imports and makes any foreign debt Russia or its companies have taken on that much more expensive in ruble terms—it also eventually produces textbook economic benefits. Since a devaluation raises import prices, it also paves the way for what economists call “import substitution,” a clunky way to say that consumers switch to buying less pricey products produced at home instead of imported goods.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (C) meets with students and staff while visiting the National Mineral Resources University (University of Mines) in St. Petersburg, January 26, 2015. Credit: Mikhail Klimentyev/RIA Novosti/Kremlin/Reuters

For companies such as Severstal, which exports around 30 percent of its output, the benefits of devaluation are obvious: All of the costs that go into producing steel in Russia—iron ore, manganese, nickel, labor, electricity—are priced in rubles. That means the companies' costs relative to their international competitors' have plummeted. At the same time, any steel they sell abroad is priced in either U.S. dollars or euros—both of which have risen in value against the ruble. When the companies bring those sales dollars home, they are worth far more in rubles than they were a year ago.

The same phenomenon applies in a big way to Russia's vast energy sector. Moscow exports huge amounts of oil and gas, and brings in dollars for it. That's why Rosneft, a huge oil producer with close ties to Putin's Kremlin, reported a revenue increase of 18 percent last year, compared with an increase of less than 1 percent for its international

competitors, according to Bloomberg data. This is a big part of the reason why Russia's tax revenue has not fallen off a cliff, mitigating somewhat the pain of last year's crisis. Russia's oil output is still near record highs—one of the reasons, along with continued full-tilt Saudi output, that prices remain so weak.

The world shouldn't have been surprised by what has happened. More or less the same thing happened in 1998, when the Asian financial crisis spread to Russia and Moscow both defaulted on its international debt and devalued the ruble. There was an immediate negative economic shock, followed by an import substitution-led recovery that was sharper than most international economists at the time believed would occur. "This argues for an economic recovery now similar in nature, if not necessarily in magnitude, to the one after 1998," says Ivan Tchakarov, an economist at Citicorp.

What has changed since then, of course, is the nature of the Russian government and how it is perceived in the West. Back then, Russia was a wobbly new democracy trying to make a transition to capitalism that the developed world was desperately trying to stabilize. Today, less than two decades later, Putin sits atop the Kremlin, openly hostile to the United States with what appears to be a revanchist agenda: slowly but surely reassembling the old Soviet Union.

When oil prices crumbled last year, there was a fair bit of hope in Western capitals that the pain would do what sanctions hadn't yet: force a Russian climbdown in Ukraine, and perhaps prompt Putin to turn back inward and tend to his troubles at home.

Maybe that was wishful thinking. Whatever the case, it's now a moot point. The Russian economy is showing enough resilience that it appears unlikely to check Putin's behavior abroad. Public opinion surveys at home provide little evidence that the people have turned on him. For

Washington and its allies, the time for wishful thinking is over. Vladimir Putin is not going anywhere.

Correction: This article originally incorrectly stated Severstal's exports accounted for 20 percent of output. Exports were 30 percent in 2014. Additionally, an incorrect statement that Severstal plans to add at least 2,000 new workers has been removed.



Yahya Arhab/EPA

THE COMPLEX POLITICS BEHIND THE CHAOS IN YEMEN

**IT'S TOO EASY TO BLAME IRAN FOR THE CHAOS IN
YEMEN THAT STEMS FROM YEARS OF MISTAKES.**

The casual reader of a recent [New York Times op-ed](#) by Yemen's exiled president, Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, might come away with the impression that all Yemen's problems are the fault of Iran and its "puppets," the Houthi rebels who in January drove Hadi out of Sanaa.

That's a gross oversimplification; Yemen has been smoldering for decades. Most of the problems are homegrown, and it's hard to argue that Iran has had more influence than other foreign powers.

The poorest country in the Middle East and a corrupt autocracy for three decades, Yemen started unraveling in 2011, when then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh reluctantly ceded power, under pressure from Gulf states and Western powers, during the Arab Spring. He was succeeded by his vice president, Hadi, who had popular support and a mandate to oversee a transition to more democratic rule through a so-called national dialogue that was supposed to usher in a new era for Yemen. The United Nations sent a special envoy, Jamal Benomar, and other bureaucrats to help Hadi's government stamp out corruption and create a new constitution.

For years, little has functioned in Yemen, from schools to hospitals, ministries and the disastrous **water system**. Half the population is illiterate, there is a huge problem with malnutrition, and an archaic patriarchal system rules daily life for most Yemenis. In 2013, while traveling through the country with the NGO Oxfam, I met girls as young as 11 who were forced into marriages out of economic necessity. Their mothers, rather than being horrified at signing over their prepubescent daughters to men three times their age, were delighted they had one less mouth to feed.

At the same time, the United States maintained an alliance with Yemen against Al-Qaeda, under which U.S. forces conducted drone strikes that sometimes missed their targets, exacerbating anti-government and anti-American feelings.



Yemeni security forces stand guard in front of a poster bearing the portrait of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi during a pro-government demonstration on August 26, 2014, in the Yemeni capital Sanaa. Credit:

Mohammed Huwais/AFP/Getty

There is also a history of deep regional and tribal divisions. Until 1990, South Yemen was a separate country, home to a mostly Sunni population, and a civil war racked it in the mid-1990s. In the north, Saleh waged six military campaigns against those who belong to a distinct branch of the Shiites called the Zaidis. The Zaidis, who make up 20 percent of Yemen's population, responded to years of oppression by forming a civil rights movement, known as the Houthis.

In 2013, Hadi's national dialogue was losing momentum, politics were as corrupt as ever, and the Houthis had had enough. Their militias started pushing south from their homeland in the north, promising, "We will save you from a corrupt regime."

"The Houthis weren't the only ones who got nothing from the state, even back in the days of Saleh," says one former U.N. official. "But the reason they upped the ante

was that there was a tacit agreement between the state and tribes that everyone somehow scratched everyone else's back—with the state being the main banker.”

The Houthis, with the backing of their Shiite brethren in Iran, arrived in Sanaa by mid-2014. By January 2015, they had taken over the capital, as well as carved out a sizable chunk of the country. They brought in a new government that was broadly technocratic, and forced Hadi to resign and flee to his hometown, Aden. “From then on, the country unraveled, and the U.N.—still overseeing the transition process—lost all credibility,” says one former EU diplomat.

The U.N. special envoy for Yemen, Jamal Benomar, has been the target of criticism, but Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, an academic from Mauritania who is deputy director of a think tank called the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, argues that: “The U.N. did not completely fail in Yemen. Benomar arguably did a good job.... Faced with unpredictable and unreliable parties, he managed to get a decent deal [for Saleh to step down], while other volatile post-Arab Spring theaters, like Libya, went into chaotic drift.”



Credit:

Now, however, Yemen and Libya are both aflame. Former President Saleh is actively backing the Houthis. In March, Saudi Arabia launched airstrikes, citing Iranian interference in Yemen, and mobilized other Arab countries to join the cause. The United States, seeing Yemen as a key in the fight against terrorism, has offered qualified support for the Saudi-led offensive.

Today on the streets of Sanaa, the Saudi missiles, meant to take out Houthi military installments, are hitting far too many civilians. Hospitals are filled with survivors whose blackened skin and broken bones are brutal evidence of how hard it is to root out militarily adept rebels in an urban setting. The U.N. has said more than 600 people have been killed by violence since March 19. Water is scarce, electricity is intermittent and food is in short supply in parts of the country.

Yemen was top of the agenda at the Arab League Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh at the end of March, but there was little progress in talks there, and threats of a ground

invasion by Egyptian and Saudi forces raised fears of the crisis escalating. "Our country is being destroyed now," says Najla Mohammed, a 34-year-old teacher in Sanaa. "And the mediation to end this crisis or a new constitution won't actually stop the Saudi airstrikes, or provide people with what they need—food, drinking water, oil. What we need first is to stop airstrikes, then go for dialogue."

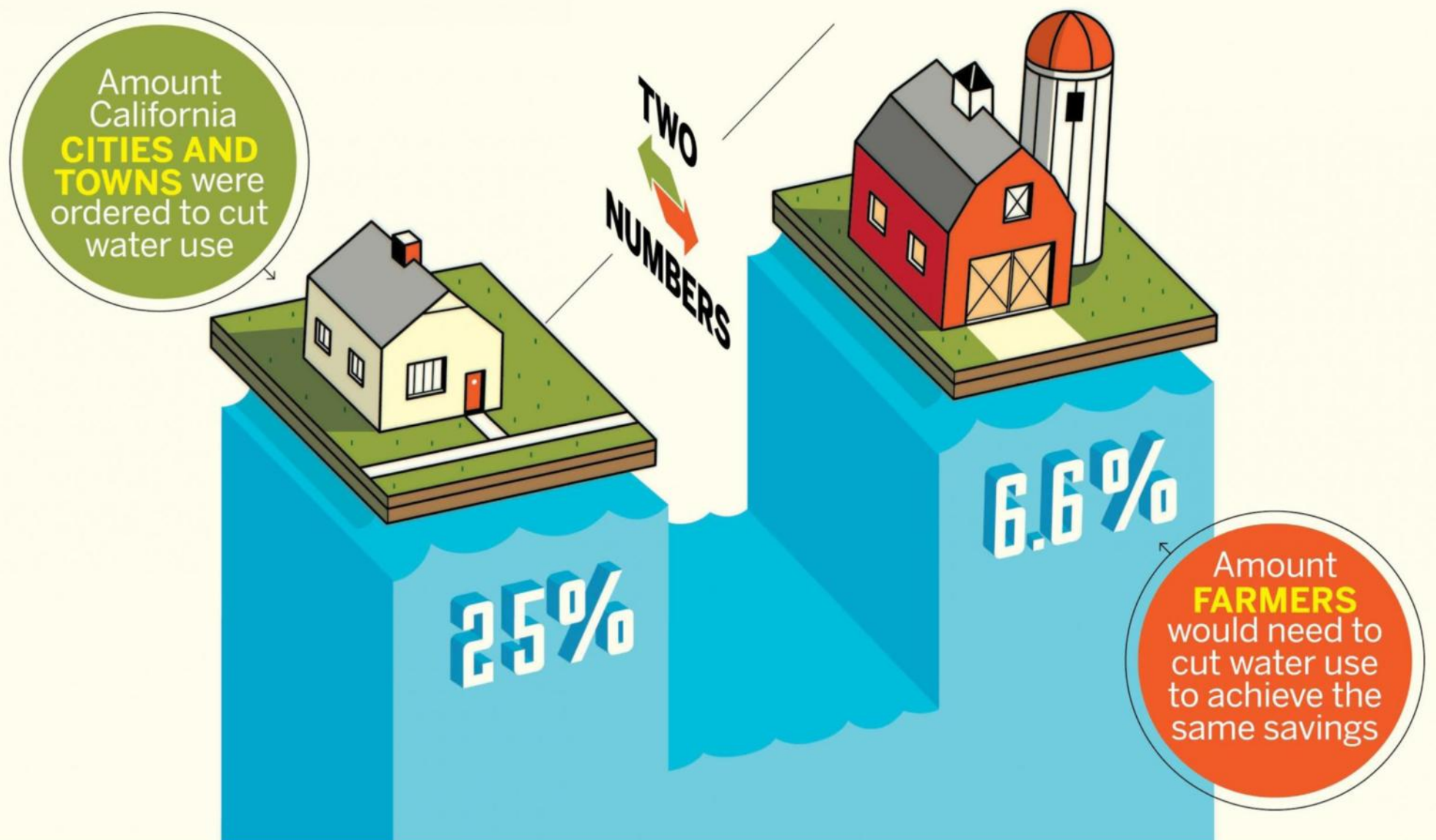
Nearly 60 percent of Yemen's population is under 25, and their top concerns are employment, education and a less corrupt society. The U.N. focus on building a new constitution after the fall of Saleh seems remote to many, especially given the latest violence. When asked about this, Najeeb al-Resafi, a 34-year-old civil engineer, says, "Constitution? We are being killed.... Our children and women are being killed. And you are talking to me about a new constitution and dialogue? What I want is these airstrikes to stop shelling us!"

Finding a solution for this crisis will require an honest assessment of what caused it, so it's not merely finger-pointing to ask: Who lost Yemen? Was it the legacy of Saleh's greed, Hadi's inefficiency, Iranian meddling, or the miscalculations of Western countries that saw Yemen only as a bulwark against terrorism rather than a failed state that would soon collapse?

In his New York Times op-ed, Hadi said the Houthis must withdraw and disarm their militia and return to dialogue, or face further military action from the Saudi-led coalition until his government is restored. "If the Houthis are not stopped, they are destined to become the next Hezbollah, deployed by Iran to threaten the people in the region and beyond," he wrote. "The oil shipments through the Red Sea that much of the world depends on will be in jeopardy, and Al-Qaeda and other radical groups will be allowed to flourish."

In other words, it's all about terrorism and oil. If only it were that simple.

— With additional reporting by Almigdad Mojalli in Sanaa.



California Dept. of Water Resources

CALIFORNIA'S FARMS WOULD ONLY NEED TO CUT WATER BY 6.6 PERCENT TO MATCH URBAN RESTRICTIONS

CALIFORNIA MAY NEED TO RATION WATER FOR FARMERS, TOO

Faced with the worst drought in its history, California has told towns, businesses and private citizens to replace

their lawns with plants that aren't so thirsty and make other changes to reduce water usage by 25 percent. That could save around 500 billion gallons of water a year, which is impressive. But critics say it's not enough.

Why, when the state's stored reservoir water supply is at risk of drying up within a year, is Governor Jerry Brown focusing only on ornamental landscaping? Agriculture uses nearly four times as much water as urban consumers. Towns and cities in California use around 9.1 million acre-feet of water per year (nearly 3 trillion gallons), while agriculture uses 34.6 million acre-feet per year. In the Central Valley, desperate farmers are pumping greater and greater quantities of water from dwindling aquifers. The land in some places is subsiding by 1 foot per year—sinking into the emptying water table.

While it's hard to argue that highway medians and golf courses need all that green grass, it seems odd to ignore farming entirely when seeking to conserve water.

Towns and cities have been ordered to replace 50 million square feet of lawns with landscaping that doesn't require constant watering, and golf courses, campuses and other highly irrigated ornamental landscapes will be required to significantly cut their water use. If the state focused its mandatory water cuts on agriculture industry, farms would need to reduce their use by just 6.6 percent to achieve the same savings.

So why isn't the state cracking down on farmers? "Agriculture has already suffered major cutbacks," Brown said on April 1, the day he announced the water policy, standing on dry grass in the Sierra Nevada, where 5 feet of snowpack should have been. Already, many farmers had to leave fields fallow, amounting to 400,000 acres of land taken out of production last year.

California has by far the largest agricultural industry of any state in the U.S., producing nearly half of the country's

fruits, nuts and vegetables. In 2013, farmers in the state generated **\$46 billion** worth of revenue.

University of California, Davis, researchers **estimate** that soaring water prices and lost crops have already cost farmers \$2.2 billion in 2014 and resulted in the loss of about 17,100 jobs. Industry groups say allocations of subsidized water from California's State Water Project and the federally managed **Central Valley Project**, which typically provide water from reservoirs to farmers in good years, have already dwindled dramatically. "Farmers in the San Joaquin Valley have been the only ones to have their water actually completely cut off," Dave Puglia, of the Western Growers Association, told **NPR**. "I don't know how you can ask farmers to conserve more than zero."

It may be a painful prospect, but if the drought continues, farmers may face mandatory cuts too.



Michael Dalder/Reuters

THE RACE AGAINST TIME TO CONVICT SURVIVING NAZIS

OPERATION LAST CHANCE: NAZI-HUNTERS ARE ON A QUEST TO PROSECUTE WAR CRIMINALS BEFORE THEY DIE.

Martin Uebele has dealt with some horrific cases in his role as chief prosecutor in the east German city of Görlitz – but none as shocking as his current investigation of a local

man accused of murdering thousands of innocent civilians more than 70 years ago.

Uebele soon hopes to put the 90-year-old man on trial for his role in the shooting of 18,000 Jewish inmates on 3 November 1943 at the Majdanek concentration camp in Poland. At the time, the man – whose identity cannot be revealed until he is convicted – was 19 years old and working as an SS guard. He didn't shoot but he did nothing to stop the massacre either.

A court-appointed physician is currently evaluating the man's health, with a decision expected shortly as to whether he is fit enough to face a court.

“As a guard, he was part of the killing machine, which makes him an accessory to murder,” says Uebele tells Newsweek. “If he is incapable of participating in the court proceedings I will have to close the case.”

The mass murder at Majdanek, dubbed Operation Harvest Festival by the Germans, is an undisputed event. Yet for nearly seven decades German prosecutors were unable to bring charges against guards who were present at such killings.

But the case of John Demjanjuk four years ago changed that, and now the race is on to hunt down alleged Nazis associated with mass killings.

A court in Munich ruled that although there wasn't enough evidence to convict the 91-year-old Demjanjuk of murder, he was an accessory to the crime. He was sentenced to five years in prison but died while appealing the verdict.

The passage of time means there won't be many more opportunities to bring Nazi war criminals to court – earlier this month one of the most wanted remaining Nazis, Soren Kam, died unpunished in Denmark – but without the landmark Demjanjuk ruling, most would likely not be happening at all.

Prosecutors no longer need proof that each guard personally participated in murder. Charges can be filed against them merely for their presence at the time of the killings.

Dr Efraim Zuroff, a Brooklyn-born Jew who is the Simon Wiesenthal Centre's chief Nazi-hunter, is determined to round up as many suspects as possible in what he calls Operation Last Chance.

"Life expectancy is working in our favour," says Zuroff, who now lives in Israel. "Germany has good healthcare. These war criminals have the bad fortune of being alive."

Zuroff knows he won't find anyone as important as Adolf Eichmann, the architect of Adolf Hitler's Final Solution, which allowed for the transportation of Europe's Jews to concentration camps. Eichmann was tried in Israel in 1961 and executed the following year.

"The people we're chasing now were guards, they drove trains and buses," he says.

"It's not possible to prove they're guilty of murder, but thanks to Demjanjuk the bar is much lower."

Zuroff receives many leads, which he passes on to Germany's official Nazi-hunting agency, the Zentrale Stelle, which is obliged to act on information from the public.

"What we have to prove is that the person was serving at the extermination camp while people were being sent to the gas chambers," says Kurt Schrimm, the Zentrale Stelle's chief prosecutor. "And we have to prove the nature of their duties. A camp cook was less involved in war crimes than a camp guard."

Schrimm took over as head of the Zentrale Stelle 15 years ago and has been combing through the agency's 1.6 million cards containing information about some 100,000 suspected war criminals.

On 21 April, a 93-year-old former Auschwitz guard called Oska Gröning goes on trial in Lüneburg, 45 minutes

south-east of Hamburg, accused of assisting in the murders of 300,000 inmates between

May and July 1944. Gröning's duties allegedly involved sorting the money inmates had brought with them.

During those two months, at least 137 trains carrying Hungarian Jews arrived at the camp, and the prosecution alleges that Gröning personally supervised the ransacking of their belongings on at least one occasion. He also knew that the inmates would encounter gas, not water in the shower rooms.

In accordance with German law, Gröning isn't named in the court documents but he has identified himself, describing his recurring nightmares of watching another guard hurl a newly arrived baby against a wall until it died. He argues that his guilt is different from those who killed. He just watched.

Later this spring, another 93-year-old former Auschwitz guard, accused of assisting in the murders of 170,000 inmates will go on trial for overseeing 92 trains containing Hungarian Jews arriving at the death camp. The arrivals were classified as usable and unusable. The unusable ones were sent to their death in the gas chamber. But some of them tried to escape, and prosecutors accuse the SS officer of having participated in "brutally ending their escape".

And in Neubrandenburg, an eastern German city two hours north of Berlin, a 94-year-old Auschwitz SS medic is about to go on trial, accused of assisting in the murders of 3,681 inmates between August and September 1944.

"The failures after the war were simply too big. Many, many culprits got away," says Dr Josef Schuster, president of Germany's Jewish association. He believes there's a public benefit to the trials because they deliver invaluable material about the Nazi regime to future generations of historians.

Before Christmas, Martin Uebele, the chief prosecutor in Görlitz, searched the 90-year-old man's home and read the accusation to him. Now, the doctor's report awaits. If it gets to court, there'll be some sympathy for the man, given his age and health – but it won't be forthcoming from Wilhelm Wolff, a German Jew who fled with his parents to Britain in 1933 but is now back in Germany serving as a rabbi.

“Every person who's committed a crime has to defend himself in front of a court. It doesn't matter how old you are,” he says.

Nobody knows how many Nazi war criminals are still at large. The overshadowing matter is who's alive. Currently, some 30 death camp guards are under investigation by prosecutors in cities including Stuttgart, Munich, Mainz, Leipzig, Kiel, Nuremberg and Frankfurt. The Zentrale Stelle has also identified seven suspects living abroad, including one in Israel.

For the Nazi hunters and prosecutors, it's a race against time. They know better than anyone that the race can't be won, but nothing will dampen their fervour.



Edgar Su/Reuters

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF THE WORLD'S GHOST APARTMENTS

**ACROSS THE GLOBE, THE SUPERWEALTHY ARE
SNATCHING UP PALATIAL APARTMENTS AND DRIVING
UP THE COST OF LIVING.**

Take an evening stroll on either side of New York's Central Park and you will notice how few lights are on in the newer apartment buildings. That's because no one lives there.

Across the globe, empty luxury apartments darken many of the most desirable cities—Miami; San Francisco; Vancouver, British Columbia; Honolulu; Hong Kong; Shanghai; Singapore; Dubai; Paris; Melbourne, Australia; and London. The reason: The world's richest people are buying these grand residences not to live in but to store their wealth. In Paris, for instance, one apartment in four sits empty most of the time.

Some of these wealthy owners are looking for status, others a good investment. And for rich people in unstable countries, or those whose incomes depend on dubious businesses, holding real estate in foreign countries functions as private insurance.

Either way, the growing demand for luxury housing illustrates some of the adverse effects of the concentration of wealth at a time when worldwide wages are mostly stagnant. Because these palatial apartments and homes are rarely occupied, they impose a host of hidden costs on locals, including higher rents, longer commutes and fewer retail shopping choices. In some cities, notably New York, locals subsidize absentee owners.

The displacement of locals by the global superrich has prompted political leaders in San Francisco, Shanghai, Vancouver and New York, among other cities, to consider ways to ease the distorting effects of a relatively few wealthy people on the economies of their cities. In Singapore and Hong Kong, officials tried to slow the spread of absentee-owned luxury housing by limiting mortgages.

Welfare for the Wealthy

These days, people who enjoy rivers of cash flowing into their accounts are having a hard time finding profitable investments in enterprises that make things or sell services. Holding money in banks is unattractive because the planet is awash in so much cash, interest rates are at historic lows.

Instead of paying interest, some large cash deposits now incur bank charges.

This economic environment makes luxury apartments an attractive option to warehouse wealth. So long as other rich people are buying, owners enjoy the prospect of selling their units someday for a big profit. Many of these absentee owners buy their units through companies they control, transforming what would be personal after-tax operating costs into tax-deductible expenses. The prospect of higher prices encourages developers to buy and demolish existing buildings, often with the aid of government's power of eminent domain, which allows them to force existing owners out, paying them off at a discount.

What's also propelling this trend is the growing number of superwealthy people. There are far more billionaires than the 1,826 on the latest [Forbes](#) global list. Forbes primarily counts liquid wealth, mostly concentrated ownership of publicly traded companies that must be disclosed. Thus Forbes misses many more private and diversified fortunes. And for every billionaire, there are many more millionaires to whom the cost of a luxury apartment is little more than pocket change. Billionaires typically own 10 residences each, according to [Knight Frank](#), a global real estate consulting firm. That means, statistically, that each of those residences sits empty 47 weeks per year unless friends or business associates use the space.

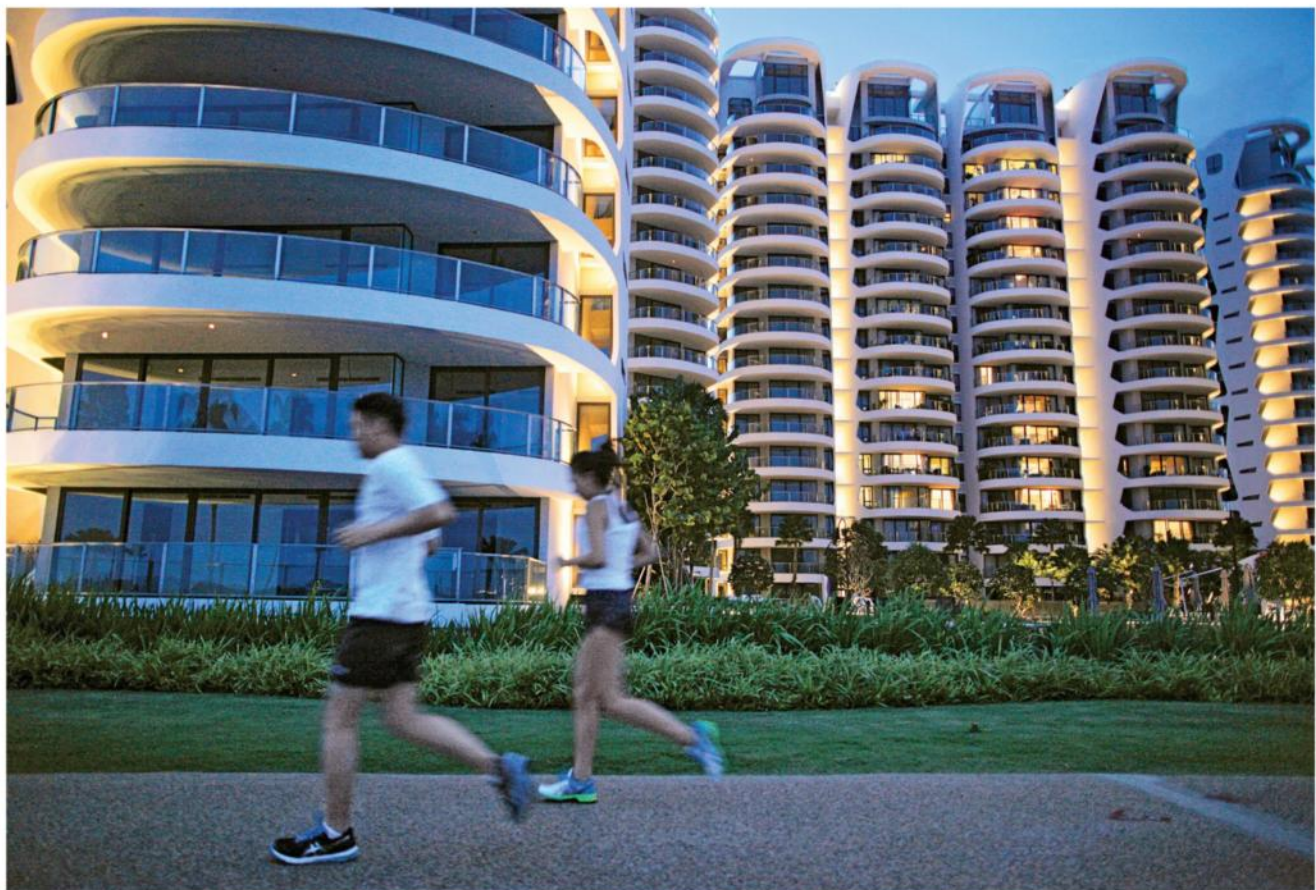
Some of this demand to own—but not live in—fancy apartments is vanity. But owning, not living in, a luxury apartment is especially attractive when the locals subsidize the costs. This welfare for the rich is done through subtle mechanisms few know about or understand.

In New York state, the average property tax on single-family homes and townhouses is 2 percent of their assessed value, and in some counties, rates exceed 4 percent. But New York City's property tax on new apartments is a trifle.

Yankees slugger **Alex Rodriguez owns** a \$6 million Upper West Side apartment with a picture-window view of the Hudson River. The owner of a \$6 million house would pay \$120,000 a year, but A-Rod's property tax is just \$1,200 a year, a rate of just two-hundredths of 1 percent annually.

In all, 150,000 New York City apartments qualify for a property tax break known as the 421-a program, which produces these low rates. Fully taxed, those apartments would pay an additional \$1.1 billion annually, the New York City Independent Budget Office calculated.

To encourage owners to occupy their units or sell, New York state legislation has been drafted to impose a progressive tax on vacant luxury apartments worth \$5 million or more. The proposed levy would start at one-half of 1 percent and rise to 4 percent on values above \$20 million.



Joggers pass the largely vacant Cape Royale condominium in Sentosa Cove on Singapore's Sentosa island, August 19, 2014. Sentosa Cove is a man-made island resort where foreigners can buy land. Dozens of houses - complete with their own private yacht berths and multiple swimming pools - sit empty while few lights are on in the apartment blocks overlooking the marina. Credit: Edgar Su/Reuters

A Safety Deposit Box in the Sky

Some buyers use luxury housing to hide criminal proceeds, often acquiring their real estate through **shell companies** set up in jurisdictions from Wyoming to Panama to the Cayman Islands, which make it easy to conceal ownership.

Government officials and relatives who have grown rich from their political power are also active buyers of housing they seldom if ever use. President Xi Jinping of China has made cracking down on corruption his primary theme with the arrests of many party officials, especially from opposing factions. But when his niece Zhang Yannan was in her mid-20s, she acquired a \$7 million Hong Kong apartment and a waterfront home in an area of \$30 million villas, both of which appear to be vacant, **Bloomberg Business News revealed** three years ago.

While I was on a reporting trip to Singapore, tax lawyers told me about rich foreign clients who buy luxury apartments in that city-state to make sure they will retain some wealth should political change or social unrest force them to flee their home countries.

One lawyer spoke over lunch about two clients with similar wealth who owned multiple Singapore apartments. One was an Indian whose business is in Pakistan, the other a Pakistani whose business is in India. The businessman in Pakistan kept 40 percent of his wealth in Singapore, the businessman in India 20 percent, illustrating their assessments of the risks they faced.

Two years ago, Sotheby's International Realty reported that people living outside Canada—primarily in China, Iran and the U.S.—had purchased 40 percent of Vancouver luxury housing.

David Eby, a British Columbia provincial legislator, said he represents “a very empowered group of wealthy individuals who feel totally helpless” to stop absentee

purchasers in Vancouver's priciest single-family neighborhood, where houses routinely sell for several million dollars. He said they object to teardowns to build what they consider oversized and tasteless mansions, as well as the loss of business to keep the area's village-like commercial corridor vibrant. Many want a heavy tax levied on empty residences to discourage absentee owners.

"I am challenged," Eby said. "How do I even talk about this issue without instigating racism against a large number of Mandarin-speaking people who come here?"

'This Is Really Hurting Our Business'

Business owners far from the urban core can feel the effects of the superrich buying apartments they never visit. When large swaths of dense urban housing are empty, it means less of the foot traffic that urbanist Jane Jacobs showed in her 1961 book, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, is crucial to both economic vitality and safety.

Jane Kim, a San Francisco supervisor, said that in her downtown district "a lot of units are sold to international and out-of-town owners, so it is great in terms of property-tax revenues and paying into a general fund by people who do not make much use of municipal services. But it also means we are not filling the needs of people who want to live in the city, because they cannot compete" for housing due to high prices for both owned and rented apartments, "even though they make good money."

In New York, in central Brooklyn, Maria Lanauze has laid off all but family employees of her Wyckoff 99 Cent and Hardware store. The reason is lack of foot traffic. The largest residential building nearby was emptied of residents who were paying \$1,200 to \$1,500 a month for their apartments. The building is being renovated for clients who can pay twice as much, but thanks to the 421-a property tax break, the landlord will contribute little to financing municipal services. "They kicked out all the Hispanic

people and are waiting for people who are forced out of Manhattan,” Lanauze said, “but so far they haven’t come, and this is really hurting our business.”

Reduced density causes multiple problems for neighborhoods, according to Mason Gaffney, a 91-year-old, newly retired University of California, Riverside, economist whose specialty is real estate taxation. “When we tear down an existing building with many smaller, lower-cost units to replace it with huge luxury [units], we do damage to retailing because there are fewer people in the neighborhood” to buy goods and services, he said.

Gaffney said larger luxury apartments also mean more workers waste time, energy and money commuting to jobs they previously could walk to, which in turn makes it more difficult for businesses to hire from an easily accessible pool of diverse people with talents.

One way to reduce the problem, Gaffney says, would be to tax only land values, not buildings, as a means to encourage the highest and best development of land, especially in urban cores. But restrictions on mortgages, higher property taxes on empty apartments and halting the use of eminent domain to forcibly acquire center-city land for new luxury housing are unlikely to stop this trend, because all that cash flowing to the top has to go somewhere.



Don Farrall/Getty

A ROBOT THAT CAN INSERT CATHETERS, COMING SOON TO A HOSPITAL NEAR YOU

**THE DEVICE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE THE
ACCURACY OF BIOPSIES AND REDUCE ERRORS WHEN
OPERATING ON THE SMALL BLOOD VESSELS OF
CHILDREN.**

As sophisticated as modern medicine has become, the best method available to doctors to insert a catheter is still

to use their own two hands, a needle and some wire. Hugo Guterman, an engineer at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, wants to remove the first requirement. His lab is currently developing the Human-Assisted Needle Delivery System, HANDS, a somewhat ironic backronym for a process that inserts surgical catheters robotically.

Most people know of catheters from their role in aiding urination for patients with bladder control problems. But doctors may also opt to use a catheter during heart surgeries, either to inject a dye into the heart to have a better look at what's awry or to send **radio-frequency energy** to suspicious tissue, so they can destroy it and restore a normal heartbeat. Missing a vein during blood draws is an annoying problem, but missing these major vessels, either through the groin, arm or throat, en route to the chambers of a patient's heart can be catastrophic.

In many surgeries, ultrasound is used to help locate artery blockages; HANDS simply wants to solve the second problem of finding a way to reach them. In its current form, the device comes in two main parts: a thick joystick reminiscent of old-school flight simulators and a hidden needle that plunges into the skin once the user finds the target on a nearby screen.

HANDS can pinpoint blood vessels from as shallow as half a centimeter to as deep as 30, Guterman says. "Any place that we can enter in the body, we think we will be able to enter much faster and with more accuracy." HANDS is patented and currently in clinical trials. It hasn't yet received U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval, but already Guterman's lab has visions of applying the technology to improving the accuracy of biopsies, with a focus on breast cancer. The lab is also currently working with Cincinnati Children's Hospital in testing to see if HANDS can help reduce nurse and doctor error when operating on children, who have smaller vessels that require more precise catheterization.

Ideally, says Guterman, HANDS will follow in the fully autonomous footsteps of current robotics, such as Intuitive's line of **da Vinci surgical robots**. With only the press of a start button, the device will be able to locate the ideal site to enter a vein or collect samples of cancerous tissue and do it successfully the first time, every time.

But first surgeons must accept it, Guterman says. His greatest hurdle isn't developing the technology but getting it into the operating room, as not all physicians may be keen on making room for robots. Dr. Ranjan Sudan, vice chair of education for the Duke University Department of Surgery, says the acceptance barrier is only a temporary one, apt to follow the normal curve of innovation. "There are a lot of [early] adopters of the technology," he says. "And the adopters are actually increasing in numbers exponentially." As time passes, the new technology will eventually become the mainstream.



Luke Sharrett/The New York Times/Redux

WHY GO TO THE DOCTOR WHEN YOUR PHONE CAN MAKE YOU BETTER?

APPS ARE ABOUT TO MAKE MOST DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENTS OBSOLETE.

Going to a doctor's office and waiting in a fluorescent-bathed room full of gross, sick people has been a common form of torture ever since doctors ended house calls. But technology can fix that, just as it has fixed other age-old

practices, like getting a taxi by standing perilously close to traffic and waving.

As a sign of what's coming, a handheld medicine startup called **Spruce** just got \$15 million in funding. Spruce is a step toward allowing you to “see” a doctor through your smartphone. Though one of the most interesting things about Spruce is that it questions why, in many cases, you need to see a doctor. Instead, why not give the doctor all your relevant information so she can review it and reply when she can?

Spruce is starting with dermatology. Once you download the app, it offers a choice of conditions: acne, eczema, bug bite and so on. Based on the condition, it asks a series of diagnostic questions (“How would you describe your skin? Normal? Oily? Dry?”). Then it tells you what kinds of pictures to take of your condition. Finally, you can pick a participating doctor to send everything to, or just choose “first available.” You’re promised a response within 24 hours, including, if needed, a prescription sent to your drugstore and instructions on how to care for your condition. The cost is \$40, not much more than the co-pay for many specialist visits, which means using Spruce can make sense even if it’s not covered by insurance.

Spruce launched an app in September to treat only acne, then it released an expanded version for more conditions in late March. The big surprise, says CEO Ray Bradford, has been how much both patients and doctors appreciate the unrushed nature of asynchronous medicine. Patients can take their time answering questions without feeling as if the doctor is nervously tapping her foot as she tries to race through a packed schedule. Doctors, who for now take Spruce cases mostly as after-hours supplementary work, can make their diagnoses with their feet up on the couch, sipping a good Bordeaux. (Hopefully, they’re not reviewing my case after the second or third glass.)

Dermatology is only the beginning, Bradford tells me. “We’re excited about the set of [medical conditions] we could apply Spruce to, but we can’t do it all at once,” he says. “We’re being disciplined, condition by condition.”

Spruce is one startup in a bubbling stew of activity around handheld medicine. You can’t even call it “**telemedicine**” anymore. That term has been around awhile and usually means real-time, Skype-like video interaction. The new breed is rethinking medicine based on smartphones, mobility and cloud-based artificial intelligence (AI).

Handheld medicine companies **Doctor on Demand** and **HealthTap** have referred to themselves as the Uber of doctors, and they’ve each raised more than \$20 million in funding. Other apps can take blood pressure and electrocardiogram readings and send them to a cardiologist. Apps for **eye tests** are becoming as accurate as those steam-punkish **contraptions** ophthalmologists push up to your face—it probably won’t take Warby Parker long to offer a prescription eye exam on your phone. Meanwhile, seeing the potential savings and convenience, state legislatures are writing **bills** that would make insurance companies pay for handheld medicine.

Down the road, AI might be the real difference maker. IBM’s **Watson** technology, installed in high-end health centers such as the Cleveland Clinic, can ask a patient questions and arrive at an accurate diagnosis. A Watson computer can be loaded with far more medical information than any doctor could ever keep in his noggin, so it can be better than a doctor when it comes to recognizing rare conditions. Watson may be complex and expensive now, but like all technology, it will get better and cheaper. Soon, a Watson-like doctor app will be able to give you a first-pass diagnosis without ever involving a human doctor. An AI doc will have some trust issues to get past, but so did ATMs when they first came out.

All kinds of trends are coming together here. Of course, the technology makes it possible, from the high-res cameras in phones to the always available cloud. A young generation that grew up connected will latch on first, but a massive wave of tech-savvy baby boomers are getting old, needing more health care and having more difficulty leaving the house to get it. At the same time, projections say the U.S. will have a **shortage** of 52,000 physicians in the next 10 years. Spruce's Bradford says that one reason he started with dermatology is that the average wait in the U.S. to see a dermatologist is 29 days.

While a Spruce "treatment" now costs \$40, it's easy to see how competition and AI—or for that matter sending asynchronous patient queries to less-costly doctors in India or Thailand—could drive prices lower. If a typical doctor's office visit for a rash or the flu or a kid's ear infection ends up being something you can do on your phone at midnight for \$20, why bother with your insurance for that level of care? Pay out of pocket, and spend your health insurance money on more catastrophic coverage.

Who wouldn't want this? For patients, going to a doctor's office when you're sick is like going to a party full of strangers when you're lonely. It might help, but it's just as likely to make you feel worse. And good doctors will be able to waste less time on trivial conditions and whiny hypochondriacs and focus on patients who really need hands-on attention.

Then, for most people, the doctor's office will become a relic of a time when health care meant that too few doctors had to see too many patients face to face. Unfortunately, though, the handheld dentist is nowhere on the horizon.



Paige Blankenbuehler for Newsweek

FIREFIGHTING DRONES COULD SAVE COSTA RICAN TROPICAL FORESTS

**FIREFIGHTERS THAT PROTECT THE NATIONAL PARK
LANDS OF COSTA RICA HAVE INVESTED IN DRONE
TECHNOLOGY TO HELP SURVIVE THIS YEAR'S FIRE
SEASON.**

In Sector Pocosol, an administrative section of Costa Rica's Santa Rosa National Park, there's a wide, open field

of browned grass. Its perimeter is guarded by towering trees, branches barren of their leaves, which cover the ground after falling in the dry season heat. Shade is a stranger, and by 3 p.m. it's already 106 degrees. In the field, part of the vast Área Conservación de Guanacaste (ACG), I stand beside Arturo Cortés Angulo, a volunteer firefighter. Sweat covers his forehead as his thumbs hover over the controller of a drone.

A white machine with red stripes and four propellers sits in the grass in front of him, while an instructor speaks in stilted Spanish phrases. Its propellers buzz on and off. A group from the University of Missouri is training the firefighters to implement drone technology into their fire management strategies and better protect the conservation area. The Santa Rosa Program Protection and Fire Brigade, led by Julio Días Orias, isn't the first firefighting team to employ drones—in Brookings, South Dakota, for example, a fire department **made a \$1,500 investment** in March on a drone and GoPro Camera. But Santa Rosa is at the forefront of adding drones to land management strategies—and the first team to do so in Central America.

Fires pose a constant threat to the dry tropical forest, a rare and delicate ecosystem that once stretched from Panama to Mexico but, due primarily to clear-cutting for cattle ranching and banana plantations, is now down to 163,000 hectares of parklands. Forest fires are also a threat. For decades, firemen here have been fighting and managing fires without air support, relying on a modest artillery of brooms, leaf blowers, fire backpack pump systems and a small fleet of vehicles. The Santa Rosa fire brigade employs just 13 full-time firefighters and relies on another 53 volunteers, most of whom are Costa Rican but periodically some are foreign. During the dry season, one man is stationed at the La Palma lookout point in Sector Pocosal (named for the palm-thatch rooftop the building used to have; the current incarnation is topped with wooden planks). The lookout

provides strategic views of Liberia to the south, La Cruz to the north and out toward the Peninsula Santa Elena. Vehicles move throughout the park surveying for fires and illegal activity, sending word back to the station when they think firefighters are needed in the field.

The Costa Rican culture is laid-back—a selling point for a tourism economy drawing visitors to a simpler life—and the country has been slow to adopt new technology, Días Orias says. But that is beginning to change. On the border of Sector el Hacha near the Pan-American Highway, a drone flies over a fire and response team below. “It is a big step; it’s like opening the horizon,” Días Orias says.

Training on the drones now, Días Orias says, will put the brigade in a better position to fight the influx of fires expected to come this month. The last precipitation, in December, produced less than a half inch of rain (normally you could expect 1 to 2 inches), and trade winds gusting more than 35 miles per hour have hastened desiccation, says María Marta Chavarría, an ACG biologist. The wet season was the fourth driest in 30 years of data. “All of these changes have been impacting the landscape we knew,” Chavarría says. Generally, dry lands and increased winds make for more fire, but at the same time, since this “wet season” didn’t yield typical grass levels, fuel levels are lower, too. “On one side, that’s good news because then you don’t expect really ugly fires, because there is not a lot of fuel. At the same time, they could spread faster,” Chavarría says.

As drones wobble into the air—some of the firefighters are attempting their first flights—I’m back at the comedor (dining room), drinking lukewarm water and loitering outside of Días Orias’s office, when voices come over his walkie-talkie. A familiar word crackles through the device. “Incendio!” Fire! At this time of year, late afternoons almost always bring flames. Fires can quickly spread in the

protected area, so every plume of smoke sets off a flurry of activity in an otherwise tranquil culture.

As I later learn from Raúl Acevedo Peralta, the assistant supervisor for ACG Program Protection and Fire, today's fire was set on private land, probably to clear the way for a citrus plantation. Landowners struggling to make a living are quick to light fires if it means they can grow more crops, he says. In fact, almost all Guanacaste fires are caused by human activity: ranching and agricultural practices, but also arson against the park or individuals residing near the boundaries. "These fires are crimes against the environment and the ACG," Días Orias says.

A changing climate and unpredictable rain events have contributed to an increase in fires, says Chavarría, who has been compiling data in the park since 1997. Only very rarely do they start naturally, though. Lightning may have caused fires in the park previously, but the first confirmed spark was May 2009 in Sector el Hacha. Since then, only one other natural fire has been confirmed, Acevedo Peralta says. Human-caused events far outweigh the natural ones, and in the dry climate fires smolder and can spark with the slightest temptation. One fire I could see from the lookout point in Sector Pocosol had been burning for approximately 20 days just beyond the protected area. On average, 22 fires per dry season set the ACG ablaze.

When I visited the Santa Rosa fleet at the end of March, Días Orias took me out to Parcela el Príncipe, a demonstration plot within the park boundaries, to show me one way drones could help. At the plot, the fire brigade set a field of jaragua grasses ablaze. Above the flames hovered a Phantom 2 Vision+ drone, piloted by Muhammad Al-Rawi, an electrical engineering student at the University of Missouri and drone flight instructor. In a real-world application, flying drones over fire sites will enable Días Orias to view his crew in real time from a bird's-eye perspective. The drone's camera transmits the flight-point-

of-view to a smartphone attachment, and Días Orias says once his team is using the equipment in the field, he'll be able to communicate different approaches to controlled burns and other fires as they're happening.

The team was able to purchase the four Phantom model remote-controlled systems designed by Da-Jiang Innovations thanks to support from the nonprofit Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund. Al-Rawi is a teaching assistant for a drone journalism course at the University of Missouri and was recruited for the training by Bill Allen, a professor of science journalism at the university, who provided input on drone models for the ACG. "I have a lot of fun designing and building these machines, and I find it just as fun to train someone and make it easier and safer to do their jobs," Al-Rawi says. "I feel like we're putting this in good hands, to good use."

The firefighters are already coming up with innovative ways to use their new, sophisticated equipment. I sat in on a brainstorming session in which firefighters, volunteers and other park employees produced an impressive list of possible uses: monitoring direction and speeds of advancing fires, establishing safety points, assisting with geographic information system mapping, tracking down illegal logging, illegal cattle grazing and even locations of illegal marijuana plantations. Días Orias thinks drones will become a regular part of operations and will help protect the lands and the tens of thousands who come to visit the national park every year.

A visiting volunteer firefighter from Palamós, Spain, Jordi Monge Comas, says the technology could prevent injuries and save lives. In 2009, five of his Spanish colleagues were killed in a major fire on the countryside in Horta de Sant Joan near Tarragona, Spain. The Pau Costa Foundation, named for one of the fallen firefighters, is funding his stay in Costa Rica, where his directive is to learn about fire practices on the ground in Central America.

In Spain, helicopters are used for fire response, but in Costa Rica, all the defense and prevention happens on the ground. Monge Comas, who has more than 20 years of experience in forest ecology and fighting fires in Spain, says he sees an opportunity for using drones to get detailed perspectives that a helicopter could not. In some cases, a drone could be used in place of a helicopter, saving money in the budget and delegating more personnel to safety. “If fires trap a man, we could see from a drone where a safe exit route is,” Monge Comas says. “To me, it’s all about two words: Save lives.”

Nearing my last day at the Área Administrativa Pocosol with the Costa Rica fire brigade, firefighter Raúl Acevedo Peralta stands on the beach of Bahía Potrero Grande with a drone controller, preparing to land the drone into the outstretched hands of Francis Joyce, an interpreter for the University of Missouri trainers. He’s the first on the team to fly the machine in the field, and the drone lowers slowly, its red light flashing—50 feet, 30 feet, 10 feet—into Joyce’s hands. There’s applause in the foreground by university trainers, marking the brigade’s entrance into the future of firefighting. Acevedo Peralta smiles and silently hands the drone to Días Orias.

This work was supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Follow Paige Blankenbuehler on Twitter [@paigeblank](#).



Michael Ip for Newsweek

ELI KLEIN ON RIDING THE WAVE OF CHINA'S CONTEMPORARY ART SCENE

**HOW A BLUNT-SMOKING SMART-ASS FROM LOWER
MANHATTAN BECAME A KINGMAKER IN THE CHINESE
CONTEMPORARY ART WORLD.**

When prepared properly, the yin-yang fish is gutted so quickly it survives long enough to roll its eyes at you from your plate. This Chinese delicacy—also known as “dead-

alive fish”—is cooked with a wet towel wrapped around the head and gills, while the rest of the fish is deep-fried. The dish is banned in Taiwan, where it was invented, as well as Australia and Germany. In mainland China, it is considered a luxury, but when Eli Klein came face-to-face with one, he understood it was a test. He knew his future was about to be determined in a Shanghai alley.

Klein and his Chinese partner, Shanna Sun, were scrambling to establish their Klein Sun Gallery, and this was a crucial meeting. Klein knew he had to keep face at any cost if he hoped to convince a prominent Chinese dealer to hand over the reins and export millions in art to the West, to Klein. And so he smiled as he ate that ingeniously tortured fish...and found it was much tastier than the dog and cat he'd been served as a teenager in Hong Kong.

Klein, who now has a gallery in Manhattan and a showroom in Beijing, had neither an interest in, nor a hope of, competing with the old-world art elite, those dealers who once called Warhol “Andy” and phoned the ambulances whenever Jean-Michel Basquiat OD'd. Around 10 years ago, when Chinese art was still mostly dusty filler for antiquities auctions, Klein sensed that the mainland's contemporary art scene could be huge—and dominated by him, because of his ability to straddle East and West. He was right and is now rich: The Klein Sun Gallery has had soaring sales for the past five years, ascending along with the booming Chinese art market.

I first met Klein and his twin brother, David, 20 years ago at a Manhattan public school that was nevertheless elite. Their family had just returned to New York after a year in Hong Kong, and the twins were so much cooler, tougher and ambitious than me and my nerdy friends. Roaming lower Manhattan like made men, brazenly smoking pot and using Cantonese for their private conversations, the twins seemed to us godlike, like something out of a Biggie rap. Eli sported dreadlocks, let his jeans sag and

was convincingly tough. “I was a blunt-smoking, street-smart menace to society,” he recalls. “You couldn’t tell me nothing.”

Klein’s father had moved the family to Hong Kong to teach law. He knew that all but a very few school-age foreigners went to British institutions, but unlike most coddled offspring of expats, his boys were sent to public schools. Separately—self-reliance was that semester’s big lesson. Instantly and constantly bullied for being the only round-eye in the school cafeteria, Klein says he didn’t win every fight, but he never backed down from one.

That was another test Klein passed; his prize that time was a girlfriend with a father climbing up the ladder in a Triad organization (also called Tongs). The girl’s brother became Klein’s best friend, and Klein says the time he spent with that family cleansed him of the odor of Western condescension that the Chinese always suspect from white men and always resent. He was thus excluded from the category of “white devils.”



A view of Shen Shaomin's exhibit, "Handle With Care." By some calculations, half of the world's 10 best-selling artists are Chinese. Klein represents two of them, Li Hongbo and Liu Bolin. Recently, even old-guard collectors like casino billionaires Stephen Wynn and Stanley Ho have started spending heavily on Asian art. Credit: Michael Ip for Newsweek

“To do business in China, you have to be Chinese,” Klein explains. “I use translators for formality, so it’s not language but mindset we’re talking about. What’s cutthroat in the States is standard on the mainland. Western morals are a handicap. Squeamishness, your grave. Chinese business is preyed on by a bureaucracy run by whim and operates according to an approximate understanding of time that Westerners cannot comprehend. It requires patience, ruthless acumen, personal bonds, respect and, most of all, the ability to discern when to use what. And never lose face.”

It might seem that a sure way to lose face would be to play a cold-hearted, skirt-chasing version of Klein on Bravo’s *Gallery Girls*, a reality show that came and mercifully went in 2012. Most art dealers at his level wouldn’t imperil their carefully manicured image by participating in such fluff, but Klein knew it would amuse

the Chinese artists he represents and impress his clients from Latin America and post-Soviet states.

The critics are divided on this new Chinese art; the traditionalists insist it is a derivative fad, while progressives declare it a revolution. Sotheby's, the esteemed auction house, is doubling down on the revolt. It knows the nouveau global clientele prefers Chinese artists to Western ones and is voting with its rubles and rupees. By some calculations, half of the world's 10 best-selling artists are Chinese. Klein represents two of them, Li Hongbo and Liu Bolin. Recently, even old-guard collectors like casino billionaires Stephen Wynn and Stanley Ho have started spending heavily on Asian art.

The difference between Western art and the Chinese process is subtle. European culture is still enthralled by the lone genius; Chinese artists, raised in Buddhist and Communist societies, find the traditional cult of personality unnatural, while many of their clients consider it arrogant. This world favors collaboration over our lone gunmen. Perhaps that is why 78 people did their best to not move for three hours last fall in Klein's gallery. They stood still to become parts of a Bolin work—the artist delicately colored the volunteers' bodies to match whimsical backgrounds and photographed the result. By accurately hiding people in images, Bolin melts egos into their contexts. He's explained this process as restoring a proper "balance."

Western cultural priorities are the opposite: We celebrate individual glory instead of harmony with nature or even our society. Nevertheless, prominent figures like Jean Paul Gaultier, Angela Missoni and Wilbur Ross have been "camouflaged" by Bolin into currency, brick walls and other artworks. Bon Jovi commissioned a Bolin album cover.

The Chinese process isn't typical of the art world. Klein isn't an ordinary art dealer ("My blunt-rolling skills were impeccable"), and his buyers are not the usual suspects.

Many are new collectors spending new money. Only a third are American; the rest are from places far from New York City or Paris or Berlin in both miles and attitude. They're unimpressed with Western ideals, and although they have "I'll take that, that and that" money, they buy art with their heads more than their hearts. Klein puts it more plainly: They don't buy, they invest. That's why he has developed a novel pitch to steady the hand signing a check for an oil on canvas big enough to buy an oil field. He argues that Chinese art is the perfect investment. "Let's say you wanted to invest into an entire culture that was headed for prosperity?" he might say to a wavering client. "Like China. Over a billion people are Chinese—one out of five human beings. How would you go about putting your money on them? With many conventional avenues closed, you invest in their culture."



Some more of the "Handle With Care" exhibit. "To do business in China, you have to be Chinese," Klein explains. "I use translators for formality, so it's not language but mindset we're talking about." Credit: Michael

Ip for Newsweek

The traditional method is currency speculation, but China's central bank makes this impossible; it manipulates

the yuan to an artificially low value to make that country's manufactured exports the best deal in the world. But China's art market is the fastest-growing one on earth—America remains the largest, but China's closing fast. Wealth is no longer concentrated in the pale hands of Europeans; Klein does get phone calls from Monaco, but most of his customers are new to both collecting and wealth.

The Chinese boom troubles the art establishment; Forbes's Alexandre Errera says a common criticism is that the art "is repetitive, kitsch, only about Mao and the Cultural Revolution." True or not, it matters little to Klein. Business is business, and good business means following the money. (As an added bonus, the playful extravagance and accessibility of Chinese art looks great on an oligarch's wall, and it turns out that Brazilian soybean barons are not fond of abstract expressionism.)

Klein has been preparing for China's cultural emergence since that first bloody nose at 14. When Hong Kong now calls to confirm that millions of dollars in bulky sculpture have safely reached their destination, Klein knows whom to thank and how. He may scout in Beijing and have a gallery there, but he retains his Hong Kong ties. And that middle-management Triad boss he met 20 years ago, when his girlfriend brought him home to meet the parents, isn't mid-anything anymore. Like Klein, he has gone legit and today makes sure things run smoothly for the Klein Sun Gallery.

And if Gaultier calls from Paris to ask if Bolin can paint him to look as if he's part of Versailles, Klein can set that up, too.



Stanley Bielecki Movie Collection/Getty

*MORE REAL THAN
REALITY TV: HOW
ALBERT MAYSLES
TAUGHT AMERICA TO
FEEL*

EVEN AFTER HIS DEATH, ALBERT MAYSLES, THE SO-CALLED DEAN OF DOCUMENTARY, WILL BE MOVING AUDIENCES.

Before there was reality television, with its scripted dramas and unlikeable characters, there was a group of American filmmakers who looked at the world with fresh eyes (and lenses) and captured something as close to truth as we'll ever see on film.

After five decades of filmmaking, Albert Maysles, the so-called Dean of Documentary, died March 5 at the age of 88. But he'll still be moving audiences. *Iris*, his documentary about fashion icon and interior designer Iris Apfel, will have its worldwide release this spring, and *In Transit*, a portrait of America through the stories of riders on Amtrak's Empire Builder, its busiest long-distance train route, has its debut at the Tribeca Film Festival in April.

Part of the *cinéma vérité*, or direct cinema, movement that eschewed voice-overs or scripts in favor of carefully recording reality, Albert and his brother David helped revolutionize documentary film in the 1960s and 1970s. They were aided by an early-1960s innovation: the sync-sound, handheld camera, which allowed them to roam unfettered by cables. Freed from the studio, the Maysles brothers—Albert on camera, David recording sound—were released into the wilds of the late 1960s, with all of its political and cultural cataclysms. What they found is documented in their best-known films, which still seem radical: *Salesman* (1968), *Gimme Shelter* (1970) and *Grey Gardens* (1975). The themes and styles explored there reverberate in popular culture and in the work of directors such as Terrence Malick, Martin Scorsese and Wes Anderson.

For *Salesman*, the Maysles followed four men doing something so alien to our click-and-shop era that we might not believe it existed if we didn't have this footage: going door to door selling expensive Bibles to people who didn't need them—and usually couldn't afford them. Introduced via intertitles with names like "The Rabbit," "The Gipper," "The Badger" and "The Bull," each salesman is shown,

alternately predatory and desperate, as he charms his way into people's living rooms and wallets.

Muffie Meyer, who, with Ellen Hovde and Susan Froemke, edited *Grey Gardens*, says great cinéma vérité directors like the Maysles didn't fuss too much about perfect lighting and angles; they worried most about "sensitivity to the situation" that allowed them "to be at the right place at the right time."

Albert grew up with a learning disability and said it forced him to focus on listening and paying attention, for fear he'd miss something. It also helped that he had professional training in listening—a degree in psychology. Before he and his brother began making movies together, he was a psychology professor at Boston University. During a trip to Russia, he had the idea to investigate Russian mental institutions, and thus he began his film career, with the 1955 documentary *Psychiatry in Russia*. His natural empathy, intense listening ability and training in psychology served him well in shooting "fly-on-the-wall" cinema.

One beautiful scene from *Salesman*—The Bull in a couple's living room—is both sad and funny. Just as he closes (improbably!) the sale of yet another expensive Bible, a woman in curlers writes out a check while her husband in a ratty white undershirt puts a record on the turntable and turns the volume up high: It's an orchestral version of the Beatles' "Yesterday."

The music drowns out the salesman's conversation with the woman—seemingly a hint from the husband that it's time for The Bull to leave. The song, which becomes the accidental but perfect soundtrack to the scene, fades out as the door-to-door salesman backs out of their driveway.

In another scene featuring music, The Badger's failed sale is punctuated by a young girl randomly hitting the keys of a piano, her descending minor-key song matching his deflated expression.

“The shock of seeing ‘real life’ up close can’t be imagined today,” B. Ruby Rich, a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and editor of *Film Quarterly*, says of *Salesman*. “It was a time with three networks on a black-and-white TV, and Ed Sullivan was prime-time entertainment. The impact of 16-mm documentary back then was like the Google Glass—but converted into an art form. They were empathy machines—they taught America how to feel.” Norman Mailer once said *Salesman* taught him more about America than any other film he’d seen.

The Maysles also taught America how to listen—and, of course, to see. Like the best psychoanalysts, who master the ability to pay attention, waiting for the moment a patient’s dull ramblings suddenly reveal a searing emotional truth, the Maysles cultivated a calm attentiveness, allowing a scene to unfold in all its ordinariness, until it shimmered and pulsed with meaning.



Two strangers meet in the observation car in a scene from the documentary "In Transit." Credit: Ben Wu/Maysles Documentary Center

Albert was able to show nuances even in stadiums filled with thousands of concert-goers, as he demonstrated in *Gimme Shelter*, which followed the Rolling Stones on the tail end of their alternately transcendent and calamitous 1969 U.S. tour. Many cultural critics point to *Gimme Shelter* as

the film that shows the end of the '60s "peace and love" movement, with its footage of the tour's climactic and chaotic Altamont concert. Mick Jagger was punched in the face on the way to the stage, and a young black man was fatally stabbed by a Hells Angels biker at the foot of that stage while the Stones were performing "Under My Thumb."

But before it gives us the darkness, Gimme Shelter gives us the shimmering light. Most live music footage is deadly dull, unable to re-create the immersive experience of a concert; but the Maysles captured the rapturous quality of communion—with a performer, with other audience members, with music—that many say has yet to be matched. Gimme Shelter is still considered one of the best rock documentaries ever made.

Conveying reality sometimes meant deploying cinematic techniques. The use of music, color and Charlotte Zwerin's masterful work in Gimme Shelter—she included scenes of Jagger watching the Stones' concert footage, creating a "film within a film" effect—feel so natural that their artfulness is often overlooked.

The Maysles were sometimes accused of exploiting their film subjects. In Gimme Shelter, they were faulted for including the Altamont stabbing in the film, dubbed the "Rock 'n' roll Zapruder" by critic Amy Taubin. And critics took issue with them filming two women some have described as mentally ill in Grey Gardens, the documentary about Jacqueline Kennedy's eccentric aunt and cousin. Albert responded by saying they directed nothing. They filmed only what was there. This is partially true.

"In Grey Gardens," says Rich, "they broke their own rules and stepped out from behind the camera, interacting with their unruly subjects, Big Edie and Little Edie, as they entered their lives and won their trust." Grey Gardens was named the top documentary of all time in a recent PBS poll and spawned a Broadway musical and an HBO movie

starring Drew Barrymore and Jessica Lange. “The film is a Rorschach test for people’s acceptance of the unconventional and eccentric,” Albert told The Boston Globe.

Making an appearance at a screening of *Salesman* in November 2014 at DOC NYC, the annual documentary film festival in New York City, Albert introduced it not with cinematic theory but with anecdotes about friendship and love. He chose salesmen from his hometown in Chicago, he said, because they were Irish and there had been strife between Jews and the Irish when he was growing up. He had hoped he would get to know them better by making the film, and he remained friends with *The Rabbit*, James Baker, until his death.

“As it says in the Bible,” he told the audience, “love thy neighbor. And I hope you’ll be able to feel that kind of love from your heart as it was from my heart in making the film.”



Sam Wolson for Newsweek

THE LAST (OR AT LEAST LOONIEST) NEWSPAPER IN AMERICA

DEEP IN THE TWISTED HEART OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, THE "ANDERSON VALLEY ADVERTISER" MAKES A THRILLING CASE FOR OLD-FASHIONED PRINT JOURNALISM.

Dire indeed will be the day when the Anderson Valley Advertiser of Boonville, California, becomes “America’s Last Newspaper,” as its masthead proudly but not yet accurately proclaims. For that would relegate the final

vestige of our vaunted free press to nothing more than an open mic for Mendocino County paranoids, weedheads, malcontents, crooks, cranks, off-the-gridders, rednecks, wonks, wankers, pedants, loons, autodidacts, Luddites and Silicon Valley castaways. When that day comes, sorely will we miss USA Today infographics on the sexual proclivities of Minnesotans, and the 37th New York Times article proclaiming Provo the next Brooklyn.

But the AVA is not America's last newspaper, at least not yet. The Palookaville Daily Democrat is said to be thriving, as are several outlets around the nation with entire investigative units devoted to Kim Kardashian's derrière (yeah, it's that big). But the AVA may well be one of the very last genuinely American newspapers, which is why the most trenchant of the many decorations on its office's wood-slat walls, aside from a post-massacre Charlie Hebdo cover, is a bumper sticker above the door that says, "AVA Nation: Boonville to Brattleboro."

Boonville is a good two hours north of San Francisco, while Brattleboro, Vermont, is two hours north and west of Boston. There are no AVA subscribers in Brattleboro today (I know because I asked, just as they told me to in high school journalism class). Regardless, the bumper sticker makes a valid point, for the AVA has long attracted an audience far beyond the verdant hills of Northern California.

"The hometown paper for people without a hometown," is how editor Bruce Anderson, 75, explains the weirdly broad appeal of the newspaper he has owned since the days when the best way to share an article with your aunt in Duluth was to clip it from the paper and mail it to her (i.e., 1984). It is a paper for those who remember America pre-Wal-Mart, who yearn for a Main Street not yet colonized by Little Caesars and Dairy Queens. For those who, as Anderson laments, live in "franchise hellholes." In other words, pretty much all of us.

“People still want to read about the area they live in,” Anderson says of his newspaper, deemed in 2004 “one of the country’s most idiosyncratic and contentious weeklies” **by a scrappy little broadsheet called The New York Times**. “The big newspapers don’t do that,” says the bearded editor, crisply dressed and irrepressibly loquacious, ever the irascible uncle who slipped you your first Bud Light at the family barbecue way back when. “And they have the resources.”

Nor do the big papers, for that matter, publish the likes of John Kendall of Rancho Navarro, who wondered in a letter last month to the AVA about a “strange light moving across the sky.” Elsewhere, this would be disregarded as paranoia. In Boonville, it’s serious stuff, seriously taken. In early March, Tim Glidewell of Boonville wrote that “[t]hese strange lights in the sky keep happening.” He discounted the possibility of a drone, then tried to rally his fellow citizens to seek out the truth: “What’s going on here, people?” Perhaps, then, the AVA will be the last newspaper in America because it will be the only one sufficiently prepared for the inevitable extraterrestrial conquest.

“When I’d fled north for Mendocino, the Vietnam War went on and on, and amphetamine, heroin, the criminals who sold it, and random homicidal maniacs had taken over the city streets,” Anderson wrote of leaving San Francisco in the early 1970s in his memoir, **The Mendocino Papers**. A product of Marin County who pitched a 13-inning shutout in high school (“the highlight of my life”), Anderson served in the Marine Corps and later went to the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo and San Francisco State. After college, he joined the Peace Corps, which sent him to Borneo. There he met Ling Mowe, with whom he recently celebrated a 50th wedding anniversary.

His explanation for their marital bliss: “She doesn’t speak English.”

Back home, Anderson dabbled in lefty politics, serving as a founding delegate of the Peace and Freedom Party. In 1969, he and his wife became foster parents to two “mega-troubled” teenagers. The brood moved to the Anderson Valley two years later “on the naive assumption that juvenile delinquents would be less delinquent under the redwoods,” as **he told the AVA in an interview last year**. Leasing a ranch, the Andersons would have as many as 10 children, all with criminal records, under their care.

Once a logging and ranching town, Boonville had become primarily famous for Boontling, a jargon developed in the late 19th century. **A still-authoritative book on Boontling** by Charles C. Adams was published in 1971, and a local named Bobby “Chipmunk” Glover, happy to harb a slip of the Ling for outsiders’ amusement, appeared on The Tonight Show With Johnny Carson. But a quirky vocabulary can’t quite power a regional economy. It would be decades before Bay Area tech wealth started wafting over these ample hills.

Despite the high local incidence of stoners and hippies, Anderson quickly found himself at odds with “local adversaries in the school system and the courts.” The country, in other words, was proving no mellower than the city. But at least its denizens were easier to shout down. Borrowing \$20,000, Anderson bought the AVA from “a woman desperate to get out of here,” as he recalled last year.

Founded in 1952, the Anderson Valley Advertiser had not exactly been gunning for the Pulitzer Prize in its 30 years of existence. It had been started by Eugene Jamison, a Round Valley American Indian, as an advertising brochure that began reporting the news the following year. In fact, the newspaper’s first breaking news item was that Boonville could print a newspaper, with the first edition of the first volume bearing the headline: “THIS PAPER IS PRINTED IN BOONVILLE.” For a single thrilling moment,

community journalism and media self-reference united in the backwoods of Mendocino.

Anderson had bigger ambitions. He sought to make the AVA “interesting and lively enough to attract readers from outside the area.” Among those who helped in that regard was Alexander Cockburn, the prominent lefty journalist and Christopher Hitchens sparring partner. As would often be the case in the future, Anderson simply wrote to Cockburn in New York and asked him to contribute. Cockburn agreed and, eventually, moved to the Anderson Valley. He passed away in 2012, but in his posthumous book of writings on life in America, *A Colossal Wreck*, he makes clear his fondness for the AVA, which he wrote “does everything a newspaper should do.” Cockburn’s colleagues from the progressive magazine CounterPunch continue to appear in the AVA.

Robert Mailer Anderson, Bruce’s nephew, became an unofficial AVA fiction editor in the 1990s. Among the talents he attracted to the newspaper are Daniel Handler (better known as Lemony Snicket), who published a short story there, and the renowned illustrator Sandow Birk, who has spent about a decade on *an American version of the Koran*. Anderson, who has written a well-received picaresque novel called *Boonville*, also published well-regarded Bay Area voices like Floyd Salas and Michelle Tea, making the AVA more than just a rickety soapbox for grumpy white geezers.



An accumulation of kitchen supplies, and back issues organized by month, of the Anderson Valley Advertiser in the newsroom of the AVA in Boonville, Calif. on the morning of March 9, 2015. Credit: Sam Wolson for Newsweek

But in 2004, Anderson sold the AVA for \$20,000 to David Severn, **author of the oenocentric “Vine Watch” column**. Anderson told the Times that the Anderson Valley had “become a wine region, with total strangers dominating the political life. I began daydreaming about murdering certain people. I said, You know, this place isn’t really healthy for me anymore.” The Andersons moved to Eugene, Oregon, where Bruce started a paper similar to the one he’d just left. But the AVA Oregon proved a bust, and three years later, Anderson returned to Mendocino. He bought back the AVA for \$20,000. That same year, Twitter was valued at \$35 million.

Today, the AVA is really a two-man operation with accoutrements, with sleepy-eyed but sharp-minded Mark Scaramella, known as The Major, playing the Sancho Panza role. Ling keeps the books, though she doesn’t read the paper, her husband says. Much of the rest of the AVA is put together by contributors who are paid \$25 per article. That’s not enough to retire on a Russian River vineyard, but

Anderson reminds his writers that it is what Mark Twain once earned, per week, for plying the journalistic trade in San Francisco.

Given the free and odd spirits who pervade the Anderson Valley, the result is *Our Town on bad Mendo meth*, a Norman Rockwell scene painted in the midst of a weed-wine binge and given a makeover by Hunter S. Thompson. Behold a typical issue from 2013. Above the fold is a dispatch from court reporter Bruce McEwen, titled “Tweakers & The Women Who Love Them.” In the “Valley People” rundown, a notice laments that the “smugly oppressive dominance” of the Anderson Valley School Board by certain “palsy-walsy” potentates has made it “a kind of self-perpetuating monument to rural nepotism.” This, mind you, in a news report, not an editorial.

“Things don’t always make sense here in the Valley,” explains occasional AVA contributor Debra Keipp, who was working on an article about the crude barroom antics of a local official when I met her. The article, she said, was slightly too vituperative for Anderson, which is no small feat. (“Deb’s hate is pure,” Anderson told me when I asked him about the article, “but that one was a little too pure even for me.”) Usually, he craves invective, hyperbole and outrage. This is not the anodyne community rag for old ladies who want to clip coupons and read about lost felines. It is, instead, a weirdly edgy and sophisticated operation for old ladies with a backyard ganja grow, a degree in political science from Berkeley and a predilection for Thomas Pynchon.

And old ladies who might be Thomas Pynchon. In the 1980s, rumor took hold that the famously media-averse Gravity’s Rainbow author was writing letters to the AVA as a local Jewish spinster named Wanda Tinasky. The rumor was inspired in good part by Anderson, who loves media attention as much as Pynchon detests it. The letters were verbose and arcane in much the manner of Pynchon’s

fiction. It helped Anderson's claim that Pynchon was known to have been living in Mendo while researching his 1990 novel, *Vineland*, which some believe is set in Boonville. Anderson's reading of that novel made him think Pynchon was Tinasky. "It has been suggested," he once wrote, "that Pynchon dashed off the Tinasky letters as a warm-up exercise for a day's work on *Vineland*."

Some years later, the author Donald Wayne Foster, who had concluded that political journalist Joe Klein was behind the Clintonian novel *Primary Colors*, persuasively surmised that the Tinasky letters were written by Tom Hawkins, a Beat poet who killed his wife and then himself in 1988, right after Tinasky had published her last letter to the AVA. It is nevertheless telling that the Tinasky legend persisted for so long. When weirdos publish their weird missives in *The Des Moines Register*, nobody suspects Pynchon. But it somehow made sense that he would contribute to a newspaper that, like his fiction, treats all authority with paranoia, mocks yuppie pretensions, questions the motivations of those with power and never misses the chance to make a puerile joke.

Above all, Anderson values the AVA as a forum for the everyman (though, of course, no one gets as much time onstage as the man who owns the presses). "I think some of the letters we get from prisoners are great," he says. "I'd much rather hear from Joe Schmo than I would, say, George Will."

But no voice is quite as welcome as Anderson's own, along with those that echo his sensibilities. "Freedom of the press," the great New Yorker scribe A.J. Liebling once quipped, "is limited to those who own one." Anderson can, accordingly, say whatever he wants about the local politician, the finance minister of Greece, the wine industry, the oil industry or the strange old dude at the Buckhorn who drinks only Shirley Temples. And say it he does, week in and week out. Every enemy, real or perceived, is obliterated with a missile strike. His foes' only recompense is that they

are invited to respond in the AVA, sometimes in the very issue where they've been savaged.

Here is columnist Malcolm Macdonald on county official Dan Hamburg: "I'd sooner vote for a wild hog rooting up my trees than you again."

The writer Todd Walton on American exceptionalism: "a cancerous blood clot in the main artery of what might otherwise be an effective, functional, egalitarian global community."

Anderson on Alice Walker, who supposedly wrote *The Color Purple* "in a shack not far from downtown Boonville": "Her more recent writings," **he thundered in 2004**, were "the prose equivalent of chipmunk paintings and Hallmark narratives."

You get the point. In the eyes of some, the AVA's relentless pugilism makes Anderson a bully disguised as an underdog, a supposed freedom-of-the-press champion who happens to own the only press in Boonville. "He attacks a lot of my friends," says Jimmy Humble, a disc jockey with KZYX, a favorite Anderson piñata. "It's not fair. He's got this paper." As we chatted at the Mosswood Market, Humble complained about the time Anderson called him "Jimmy Bumble" in print. Humble responded with a letter the following week informing "Mr. Panderson" that his name had been misspelled, signing it "Dimmy Bumble."

Others have been less gracious: In a lengthy essay titled "**Liar Unlimited: The lurid history of Bruce Anderson and the Anderson Valley Advertiser**," Mike Sweeney makes Anderson look about as likable as a *Der Stürmer* scribe. The wellspring of the bad blood between Sweeney and Anderson is too complicated to explain, but this being Northern California, it involves a radical environmentalist and a car bomb in Oakland. (If you really want to know, plug "Judi Bari" into Google and enjoy the trip.)

The origins of the feud notwithstanding, Sweeney points out some of the more flagrant transgressions of the man who blithely calls himself “the beast of Boonville.” In 1988, Anderson went to jail for punching a local school official who had called him a “third-rate McCarthyite.” That same year, he published a made-up interview with local congressman Doug Bosco in which the unsuspecting baby-kisser supposedly described his constituents as clueless potheads. This was supposed to be satire, Anderson maintains. Too bad nobody got the joke.

The newspaper graveyard is ever growing: the Rocky Mountain News, The Baltimore Examiner, The Honolulu Advertiser. There is even a website, [Newspaper Death Watch](#), devoted to print journalism’s protracted demise. Yet as big-city papers die, small-town papers like the AVA appear to be thriving: A 2014 [study from the Reynolds Journalism Institute](#) found that, in nonurban areas of the United States, “67% of the people interviewed read a community newspaper at least once a week.” Al Cross of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky explained to a Stanford researcher that the “community newspaper business is healthier than metro newspapers, because it hasn’t been invaded by Internet competition.” For better or worse, the San Francisco Chronicle just isn’t going to treat the UFOs-over-Boonville controversy quite as thoroughly as the Anderson Valley Advertiser.

But that may not be enough to save the little guys from the little places. To some, even in beloved old Boonville, Anderson is an anachronism, as charmingly obsolete as the faded signs and decrepit buildings that haunt the edges of what may be only charitably called downtown. At the Boonville Hotel, a popular destination for Bay Area day-trippers, copies of The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal lay in the sun, reposing like fattened felines.

Issues of the AVA were hidden away in a corner, nursing grievances in afternoon shadows.

Across the way, at the Boonville General Store, a young woman relaxed with a novel. She had moved to Boonville two months ago, yet still hadn't heard of the AVA, which is published only a couple dozen feet from where she sat. All around her, young couples in sunglasses stared into their screens as warm winter sunlight poured down like liquid gold.

At the Mosswood Market, Dave Chambers, a quinquagenarian from San Francisco who sells wine, pecked away on his laptop. He probably belongs to the odious "Nice People" demographic Anderson reviles, yet Chambers reads the AVA once in a while. Sometimes he even takes it home and leaves it in a coffee shop, knowing some other patron will get a kick out of Anderson's ravings. But like many of those in younger generations, Chambers has no loyalty to any single outlet, getting his largely news fix from whatever source the Internet burps up.

Anderson's deputy, Scaramella, acknowledges that most subscribers are in their 50s, at least, and that the paper has few younger readers—or contributors. Neither he nor Anderson appears to think the paper will last long past Anderson. And so they are like the last two soldiers at Masada, besieged but uncowed, fighting doom column inch by column inch.

Robert Mailer Anderson, who has offered some financial assistance to the AVA (his wife is an heiress to the Oracle fortune), says he has no interest in running the paper, no desire to replace the "American phenomenon" that is his uncle. "It will exist beyond Bruce," he says, "but it won't be Bruce's AVA." He thinks that given the growth in the area's Latino population, a Spanish-language section might make sense. He suggests that his daughter, Frances, might one day edit the thing. Alas, she is only 10.

A slightly more credible line of succession has 49-year-old Zack Anderson, son of Bruce, assuming control of the AVA. Zack has contributed to his father's newspaper and confirms that the "vicious rumor" about his eventual editorship is true. Anderson is responsible for the 2008 film *Pig Hunt*, about "a murderous 3,000-pound black boar" terrorizing a remote Northern California hamlet. I fear that nothing could prepare him better to fill the pages of the AVA.

But whatever may transpire 30 years hence, when Justin Bieber is the prime minister of Canada and Ryan Seacrest is our leading public intellectual, Bruce Anderson harbors no illusions about the Anderson Valley Advertiser. "Outback newspaper publishing is a fool's game," he wrote in his memoir, "and I'm right where I should be—old and broke in Boonville."



Tammy Dunakin

RENTING A GOAT FROM AMAZON

**THE ONLINE RETAILER IS NOW RENTING OUT
RUMINANTS.**

Due to the shortage of American manpower during World War I, President Woodrow Wilson relied on sheep power to cut the White House lawn. In the 1920s the Philadelphia Phillies became their own farm team when their groundskeeper, desperate for help to maintain the Baker Bowl playing field, hired two ewes and a ram to trim the grass.

And just yesterday, Amazon began renting out goat mowers. The online company is offering “goat-grazing” services as part of the beta trial of its new **Home Services** campaign that provides everything from sink installations to yoga instruction. (At the moment, you can only rent a goat from the online retailer.) Each rental comes with a money-back “happiness” guarantee.

It turns out goats are better at clipping than sheep. According to **Modern Farmer**, it would take 83 sheep to mow 50,000 square feet of grass, but only 38 goats. Goats are also ruminants: Their four-chambered stomachs can process much more than grass, including many plants and substances that would be toxic to other critters.

Amazon has been pro-goat since last year, when Amazon Japan formed its own “**weeding corps**” of 30 to 40 goats, each with **its own personal Amazon employee ID** to work on the lawn outside the company’s distribution center. Goats and Amazon are a natural pairing because the company is based in Seattle, a city known for its state department-funded goat browsing on public underbrush. Goats can go places heavy farm machinery can’t, are cheaper than their human counterparts and leave a smaller carbon footprint. In fact, their hoofprints are cloven.

The Amazonian goats of Seattle are owned by Tammy Dunakin of Rent-a-Ruminant on nearby Vashon Island. Dunakin is prominent in goat-mowing circles, having appeared in a Colbert Report segment titled “**People Who Are Destroying America: Landscaping Goats.**” Stephen Colbert alleged that her operation was ruining the livelihoods of human landscapers. “I will not be satisfied until goats are doing all the landscaping jobs in this country,” she joked to his correspondent.

Dunakin, 53, has cropped brown hair, pale blue eyes and, on her pickup, bumper stickers that say, “THE VOICES IN MY HEAD TELL ME TO BUY MORE GOATS” and “I SUFFER FROM MULTIPLE GOAT SYNDROME (CUZ

ONE GOAT IS NEVER ENOUGH).” While talking goat, she sways to and fro, perhaps because she’s constantly being nuzzled. The moment we enter her pasture, I’m greeted by a horned and bearded buck named Ernie and his brown- and black-striped buddy, Franz. The rest of the herd surrounds us, heads rubbing against our coats. “They give great massage,” Dunakin tells me.

Which may provide a second service to offer on Amazon.



According to Modern Farmer, it would take 83 sheep to mow 50,000 square feet of grass, but only 38 goats. The goats are used to clean up some roadsides, such as this Seattle job site, seen here before a goat herd does its "work." Credit: Tammy Dunakin

Dunakin launched Rent-A-Ruminant in 2004 with 10 goats. “They looked bored, so I put their little butts to work,” she recalls. She built the business “one goat at a time,” and today has a herd of 120, all non-milking nannies (therefore, no chèvre) and castrated billies (therefore, no kids). They’re all rescue goats—unwanted pets and slaughterhouse refugees. “A lot of them come from bad situations,” Dunakin says.

Her clients range from the state's Department of Transportation to nuclear sub bases. Mostly, the beasts are used to clear out unwanted blackberry bushes. When they're not helping the environment, they're sometimes fighting crime by munching the mugger-concealing brush and weeds in high-crime areas. Alas, goats don't eat drug paraphernalia or tin cans. "Only paper and vegetation," Dunakin tell me. Cardboard political signs are particular favorites.



After the goats finish their buffet, there's hardly any green to be found.

Credit: Tammy Dunakin

She hopes to become the Starbucks of goat rentals, with outposts all over the world. She already runs an **affiliate license program** where goat herders can apply to run a rental franchise through her outfit. She's helped affiliate goat herders as far away as Australia.

The smallest number of her goats rentable on Amazon is 16; the largest, the entire herd of 120. She's now weeding through nearly 100 requests for Amazon rentals. Before she accepts her first commission, she must drive to the site, size it up and make sure there's nothing potentially

poisonous. She has turned down requests to bring the herd to bat mitzvahs and children's birthday parties. "I'm not a petting zoo," she explains.

On this afternoon at the Vashon Island pasture, I watch Franz and Ernie brush against each other; Huey, Dewey and Louie butt heads; and Spider-Man, Batman and Superman duel horns in the grass. I wonder how these troublemakers actually get work done. "Goats are ADHD. But they're problem-solvers," Dunakin says. "They work on their own time, goat time." Even on 24-hour shifts, they "get a lot of coffee breaks and naps." Dunakin is assisted by her dogs (Maddie, an Australian kelpie, and Pearl, a border collie) who circle and nip at the goats' heels, keeping them in line.

What would happen if the goats were set loose in Amazon's book division?

Goats are book lovers, she says. In fact, they devour them.

01

WELCOME TO THE RACE

Brooklyn, New York—To the surprise of very few, Hillary Clinton announced her 2016 presidential campaign on April 12, with a video and social media postings. Wasting no time, opponents plastered anti-Hillary posters near her campaign headquarters. Republican presidential candidates Rand Paul, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio also took jabs at the sole Democrat currently in the race, claiming she was out of touch and would be the equivalent of a third term for Barack Obama. Republican leadership questioned her record as secretary of state, especially her handling of the 2012 attack on the U.S. compound in Benghazi, Libya, and the controversy over her use of private email for official communications.



Robert Nickelsberg/Getty

02

HOUTHIS AND BLOWBACK

Sanaa, Yemen—Mourners carry the coffins of victims of a Saudi-led airstrike during a funeral April 10. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf neighbors have been bombing Houthi targets in Yemen for nearly three weeks, but some of the strikes have missed their target and killed civilians. The Houthis seized control of the country in January, with the backing of Iran. Saudi Arabia, with U.S. support, is seeking to restore President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi to power.



Khaled Abdullah/Reuters

03

HOLA, NEIGHBOR!

Panama City, Panama—After more than 50 years of Cold War enmity, the leaders of the U.S. and Cuba sat down for an hourlong talk as part of efforts to normalize relations between the two nations. “It was time for us to try something new,” President Barack Obama said during his April 11 meeting with Cuba’s President Raúl Castro. The two discussed plans to restore diplomatic ties and the first steps toward lifting the Cuban trade embargo, but they did not touch upon Cuba’s human rights record or plans for the U.S. to remove Cuba from its list of states that sponsor international terrorism.



04

FROM WEDDING TO FUNERAL

North Charleston, South Carolina—Jerome Flood, of James Island, South Carolina, pauses for a moment at the spot where Walter Scott was shot in the back by a police officer after a traffic stop, in the latest case of an unarmed African-American being killed by police. Scott was the best man at Flood's wedding. The officer, Michael Thomas Slager, was captured by a bystander's cellphone camera firing eight shots at Scott as he ran away. Slager claimed Scott had grabbed his Taser, but after the release of the video, he was fired and charged with murder.

